Mr. Achilles

Jennette Lee

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Mr. Achilles

BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Kate Witherill

A Pillar of Salt

The Son of A Fiddler

Simeon Tetlow's Shadow

Uncle William

Happy Island

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He flung the words from him like a chant of music (page 20)

Mr. Achilles

By

Jennette Lee

Author of

"Uncle William," "Happy Island," etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

New York

Dodd, Mead and Company

1912

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Published, September, 1912.

To

Gerald Stanley Lee

"To keep the youth of souls who pitch
Their joy in this old heart of things;

Full lasting is the song, though he,
The singer, passes; lasting too,
For souls not lent in usury,
The rapture of the forward view."

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Mr. Achilles

I

ACHILLES GOES TO CHICAGO

ACHILLES ALEXANDRAKIS was arranging the fruit on his stall in front of his little shop on Clark Street. It was a clear, breezy morning, cool for October, but not cold enough to endanger the fruit that Achilles handled so deftly in his dark, slender fingers. As he built the oranges into their yellow pyramid and grouped about them figs and dates, melons and pears, and grapes and pineapples, a look of content held his face. This was the happiest moment of his day.

Already, half an hour ago, Alcibiades and Yaxis had departed with their push-carts, one to the north and one to the south, calling antiphonally as they went, in clear, high voices that came fainter and fainter to Achilles among his fruit.

They would not return until night, and then they would come with empty carts, and jingling in their pockets coppers and nickels and dimes. The breath of a sigh escaped Achilles's lips as he stood back surveying the stall. Something very like homesickness was in his heart. He had almost fancied for the minute that he was back once more in Athens. He raised his eyes and gave a quick, deep glance up and down the street—soot and dirt and grime, frowning buildings and ugly lines, and overhead a meagre strip of sky. Over Athens the sky hung glorious, a curve of light from side to side. His soul flew wide to meet it. Once more he was swinging along the "Street of the Winds," his face lifted to the Parthenon on its Acropolis, his nostrils breathing the clear air. Chicago had dropped from him like a garment, his soul rose and floated. . . . Athens everywhere—column and cornice, and long, delicate lines, and colour of marble and light. He drew a full, sweet breath.

"How much for them peaches?"

Achilles's eye returned from Athens; it dropped through grey soot. "Five cen's," he said, dreamily.

The young woman's back was turned to him. She was hurrying on.

"You no want them?" said Achilles, gently.

There was no reply. The young woman was gone.

Achilles sighed a little and picked up the basket beside him and entered the little shop. It was darker within, darker than in the street. The light came, almost grudgingly, through the open window and door; and only the glowing yellow disks of oranges and lemons and grapefruit relieved its gloom. Achilles placed the basket carefully on a side shelf and turned once more to the street. A man had paused before the stall, looking down. Achilles hastened to the door, welcome in his dark face.

The man looked up. There was a deep line between his eyes. It focussed

the piercing glance. "How much for your melons?"

Achilles moved forward with quick, stately step. He wore a seersucker coat and black cotton trousers, but for the moment he had forgotten that his garments did not float a little as he moved. He ran a hand along the smooth, green, crinkling stripes of the melon. "Thirty-five, these—forty, these ones," he said, courteously.

The man lifted an eye. "Got a paper—for the address? I want them sent."

"I take in my haid," said Achilles, with clear glance.

The man hesitated a second. "All right. Don't forget; 1383 Sheridan Road. Send four. They'll pay when you deliver."

"I send right off," said Achilles, cheerfully. "I pick you nice ones. Good day, sir."

But the man was gone—without response—far down the street, and the crowd was shoving past. The day had begun. In and out of the gloomy shop

Achilles moved with quick, gliding step, taking orders, filling bags, making change—always with his dark eyes seeking, a little wistfully, something that did not come to them. . . . It was all so different—this new world. Achilles had been in Chicago six months now, but he had not yet forgotten a dream that he had dreamed in Athens. Sometimes he dreamed it still, and then he wondered whether this, about him, were not all a dream—this pushing, scrambling, picking, hurrying, choosing crowd, dropping pennies and dimes into his curving palm, swearing softly at slow change, and flying fast from street to street. It was not thus in his dream. He had seen a land of new faces, turned ever to the West, with the light on them. He had known them, in his dream—eager faces, full of question and quick response. His soul had gone out to them and, musing in sunny Athens, he had made ready for them. Each morning when he rose he had lifted his glance to the Parthenon, studying anew the

straight lines—that were yet not straight—the mysterious, dismantled beauty, the mighty lift of its presence. When they should question him, in this new land, he must not fail them. They would be hungry for the beauty of the ancient world—they who had no ruins of their own. He knew in his heart how it would be with them—the homesickness for the East—all its wonder and its mystery. Yes, he would carry it to them. He, Achilles Alexandrakis, should not be found wanting. This new world was to give him money, wealth, better education for his boys, a competent old age. But he, too, had something to give in exchange. He must make himself ready against the great day when he should travel down the long way of the Piræus, for the last time, and set sail for America.

He was in America now. He knew, when he stopped to think, that this was not a dream. He had been here six months, in the little shop on Clark Street, but no one had yet asked him

of the Parthenon. Sometimes he thought that they did not know that he was Greek. Perhaps if they knew that he had been in Athens, had lived there all his life from a boy, they would question him. The day that he first thought of this, he had ordered a new sign painted. It bore his name in Greek characters, and it was beautiful in line and colour. It caused his stand to become known far and wide as the "Greek Shop," and within a month after it was put up his trade had doubled—but no one had asked about the Parthenon.

He had really ceased to hope for it now. He only dreamed the dream, a little wistfully, as he went in and out, and his thought dwelt always on Athens and her beauty. The images stamped so carefully on his sensitive brain became his most precious treasures. Over and over he dwelt on them. Ever in memory his feet climbed the steps to the Acropolis or walked beneath stately orange-trees, beating a soft rhythm to the sound of flute and viol. For Achil-

les was by nature one of the lightest-hearted of children. In Athens his laugh had been quick to rise, and fresh as the breath of rustling leaves. It was only here, under the sooty sky of the narrow street, that his face had grown a little sad.

At first the days had been full of hope, and the face of each newcomer had been scanned with eager eyes. The fruit, sold so courteously and freely, was hardly more than an excuse for the opening of swift talk. But the talk had never come. There was the inevitable and never-varying, "How much?" the passing of coin, and hurrying feet. Soon a chill had crept into the heart of Achilles. They did not ask of Athens. They did not know that he was Greek. They did not care that his name was Achilles. They did not see him standing there with waiting eyes. He might have been a banana on its stem, a fig-leaf against the wall, the dirt that gritted beneath their feet, for all that their eyes took note. . . . Yet they were not

cruel or thoughtless. Sometimes there came a belated response—half surprised, but cordial—to his gentle "good day." Sometimes a stranger said, "The day is warm," or, "The breeze from the Lake is cool to-day." Then the eyes of Achilles glowed like soft stars in their places. Surely now they would speak. They would say, "Is it thus in Greece?" But they never spoke. And the days hurried their swift feet through the long, dirty streets.

A tall woman in spectacles was coming toward him, sniffing the air a little as she moved. "Have you got any bananas?"

"Yes. They nice." He led the way into the shop and reached to the swinging bunch. "You like some?" he said, encouragingly.

She sniffed a step nearer. "Too ripe," decisively.

"Yes-s. But here and here—" He twirled the bunch skilfully on its string. "These—not ripe, and these." His

sunny smile spread their gracious acceptableness before her.

She wrinkled her forehead at them. "Well—you might as well cut me off six."

"A pleasure, madame." He had seized the heavy knife.

"Give me that one." It was a large one near the centre; "and this one here—and here."

When the six were selected and cut off they were the cream of the bunch. She eyed them doubtfully, still scowling a little. "Yes. I'll take these."

The Greek bowed gravely over the coin she droppd into his palm. "Thank you, madame."

It was later now, and the crowd moved more slowly, with longer pauses between the buyers.

A boy with a bag of books stopped for an apple. Two children with their nurse halted a moment, looking at the glowing fruit. The eyes of the children were full of light and question. Somewhere in their depths Achilles

caught a flitting shadow of the Parthenon. Then the nurse hurried them on, and they, too, were gone.

He turned away with a little sigh, arranging the fruit in his slow absent way. Something at the side of the stall caught his eye, a little movement along the board, in and out through the colour and leaves. He lifted a leaf to see. It was a green and black caterpillar, crawling with stately hunch to the back of the stall. Achilles watched him with gentle eyes. Then he leaned over the stall and reached out a long finger. The caterpillar, poised in midair, remained swaying back and forth above the dark obstruction. Slowly it descended and hunched itself anew along the finger. It travelled up the motionless hand and reached the sleeve. With a smile on his lips Achilles entered the shop. He took down an empty fig-box and transferred the treasure to its depths, dropping in after it one or two leaves and a bit of twig. He fitted the lid to the box, leaving a little air, and

taking the pen from his desk, wrote across the side in clear Greek letters "πεταλοῦδα." Then he placed the box on the shelf behind him, where the wet ink of the lettering glistened faintly in the light. It was a bit of the heart of Athens prisoned there; and many times, through the cold and snow and bitter sleet of that winter, Achilles took down the fig-box and peered into its depths at a silky bit of grey cradle swung from the side of the box by its delicate bands.

II

A BUTTERFLY SPREADS ITS WINGS

It happened, on a Wednesday in May, that Madame Lewandowska was ill. So ill that when Betty Harris, with her demure music-roll in her hand, tapped at the door of Madame Lewandowska's studio, she found no one within.

On ordinary days this would not have mattered, for the governess, Miss Stone, would have been with her, and they would have gone shopping or sightseeing until the hour was up and James returned. But to-day Miss Stone, too, was ill, James had departed with the carriage, and Betty Harris found herself standing, music-roll in hand, at the door of Madame Lewandowska's studio —alone in the heart of Chicago for the first time in the twelve years of her life.

It had been a very carefully guarded life, with nurses and servants and in-

structors. No little princess was ever more sternly and conscientiously reared than little Betty Harris, of Chicago. For her tiny sake, herds of cattle were slaughtered every day; and all over the land hoofs and hides and by-products and soap-factories lifted themselves to heaven for Betty Harris. If anything were to happen to her, the business of a dozen States would quiver to the core.

She tapped the marble floor softly with her foot and pondered. She might sit here in the hall and wait for James—a whole hour. There was a bench by the wall. She looked at it doubtfully. . . . It was not seemly that a princess should sit waiting for a servant—not even in marble halls. She glanced about her again. There was probably a telephone somewhere—perhaps on the ground floor. She could telephone home and they would send another carriage. Yes, that would be best. She rang the elevator bell and descended in stately silence. When she stepped out of the great door

of the building she saw, straight before her, the sign she sought—"Pay Station."

But then something happened to Betty Harris. The spirit of the spring day caught her and lifted her out of herself. Men were hurrying by with light step. Little children laughed as they ran. Betty skipped a few steps and laughed softly with them. . . . She would walk home. It was not far. She had often walked as far in the country, and she knew the way quite well. . . . And when she looked up again, she stood in front of the glowing fruit-stall, and Achilles Alexandrakis was regarding her with deep, sad eyes.

Achilles had been dreaming down the street when the little figure came in sight. His heart all day had been full of sadness—for the spring in the air. And all day Athens had haunted his steps—the Athens of dreams. Once when he had retired into the dark, cool shop, he brushed his sleeve across his eyes, and then he had stood looking

down in surprise at something that glistened on its worn surface.

Betty Harris looked at him and smiled. She had been so carefully brought up that she had not learned that some people were her inferiors and must not be smiled at. She gave him the straight, sweet smile that those who had cared for her all her life loved so well. Then she gave a little nod. "I'm walking home," she said.

Achilles leaned forward a little, almost holding his breath lest she float from him. It was the very spirit of Athens—democratic, cultured, naïve. He gave her the salute of his country. She smiled again. Then her eye fell on the tray of pomegranates near the edge of the stall—round and pink. She reached out a hand. "I have never seen these," she said, slowly. "What are they?"

"Pomegranates— Yes— you like some? I give you."

He disappeared into the shop and Betty followed him, looking about with

clear, interested eyes. It was like no place she had ever seen—this cool, dark room, with its tiers on tiers of fruit, and the fragrant, spicy smell, and the man with the sad, kind face. Her quick eye paused—arrested by the word printed on a box on the shelf to the right. . . . Ah, that was it! She knew now quite well. He was a Greek man. She knew the letters; she had studied Greek for six months; but she did not know this word—"π-ε-τ-α-λ - - —" She was still spelling it out when Achilles returned with the small box of pomegranates in his hand.

She looked up slowly. "I can't quite make it out," she said.

"That?" Achilles's face was alight. "That is Greek."

She nodded. "I know. I study it; but what is it—the word?"

"The word?—Ah, yes, it is— How you say? You shall see."

He reached out a hand to the box. But the child stopped him. A quick thought had come to her.—"You have

been in Athens, haven't you? I want to ask you something, please."

The hand dropped from the box. The man turned about, waiting. If heaven were to open to him now—!

"I've always wanted to see a Greek man," said the child, slowly,—"a real Greek man. I've wanted to ask him something he would know about. Have you ever seen the Parthenon?" She put the question with quaint seriousness.

A light came into the eyes of Achilles Alexandrakis. It flooded the room.

"You ask me—the Parthenon?" he said, solemnly. "You wish me—tell that?" It was wistful—almost a cry of longing.

Betty Harris nodded practically. "I've always wanted to know about it—the Parthenon. They tell you how long it is, and how wide, and what it is made of, and who began it, and who finished it, and who destroyed it, but they never, never"—she raised her small

hand impressively—"they *never* tell you how it looks!"

Achilles brought a chair and placed it near the open door. "Will it—kindly—you sit?" he said, gravely.

She seated herself, folding her hands above the music-roll, and lifting her eyes to the dark face looking down at her. "Thank you."

Achilles leaned back against the counter, thinking a little. He sighed gently. "I tell you many things," he said at last.

"About the Parthenon, please," said Betty Harris.

"You like Athens?" He said it like a child.

"I should like it—if they would tell me real things. I don't seem to make them understand. But when they say how beautiful it is—I feel it here." She laid her small hand to her side.

The smile of Achilles held glory in its depths. "I tell you," he said.

The clear face reflected the smile. A breath of waiting held the lips. "Yes."

Achilles leaned again upon his counter. His face was rapt, and he spread his finger-tips a little, as if something within them stirred to be free.

"It stands so high and lifts itself"—Achilles raised his dark hands—"ruined there—so great—and far beneath, the city lies, drawing near and near, and yet it cannot reach. . . . And all around is light—and light—and light. Here it is a cellar"—his hands closed in with crushing touch—"but there—!" He flung the words from him like a chant of music, and a sky stretched about them from side to side, blue as sapphire and shedding radiant light upon the city in its midst—a city of fluted column and curving cornice and temple and arch and tomb. The words rolled on, fierce and eager. It was a song of triumph, with war and sorrow and mystery running beneath the sound of joy. And the child, listening with grave, clear eyes, smiled a little, holding her breath. "I see it—I see it!" She half whispered the words.

Achilles barely looked at her. "You see—ah, yes—you see. But I—I have not words!" It was almost a cry. . . . "The air, so clear—like wine—and the pillars straight and high and big—but light—light—reaching. . . ." His soul was among them, soaring high. Then it returned to earth and he remembered the child.

"And there is an olive-tree," he said, kindly, "and a well where Poseidon—"

"I've heard about the well and the olive-tree," said the child; "I don't care so much about them. But all the rest—" She drew a quick breath. "It is very beautiful. I knew it would be. I knew it would be!"

There was silence in the room.

"Thank you for telling me," said Betty Harris. "Now I must go." She slipped from the chair with a little sigh. She stood looking about the dim shop. "Now I must go," she repeated, wistfully.

Achilles moved a step toward the shelf. "Yes—but wait—I will show

you." He reached up to the box and took it down lightly. "I show you." He was removing the cover.

The child leaned forward with shining eyes.

A smile came into the dark, grave face looking into the box. "Ah, he has blossomed—for you." He held it out to her.

She took it in shy fingers, bending to it. "It is beautiful," she said, softly. "Yes—beautiful!"

The dark wings, with shadings of gold and tender blue, lifted themselves a little, waiting.

The child looked up. "May I touch it?" she asked.

"Yes— But why not?"

The dark head was bent close to hers, watching the wonderful wings.

Slowly Betty Harris put out a finger and stroked the wings.

They fluttered a little—opened wide and rose—in their first flutter of light.

"Oh!" It was a cry of delight from the child.

The great creature had settled on the bunch of bananas and hung swaying. The gold and blue wings opened and closed slowly.

Achilles drew near and put out a finger.

The butterfly was on it.

He held it toward her, smiling gently, and she reached up, her very breath on tiptoe. A little smile curved her lips, quick and wondering, as the transfer was made, thread by thread, till the gorgeous thing rested on her own palm.

She looked up. "What shall I do with it?" It was a shining whisper.

Achilles's eyes sought the door.

They moved toward it slowly, light as breath.

In the open doorway they paused. Above the tall buildings the grey rim of sky lifted itself. The child looked up to it. Her eyes returned to Achilles.

He nodded gravely.

She raised her hand with a little "p-f-f"—it was half a quick laugh and half a sigh.

The wings fluttered free, and rose, and faltered, and rose again—high and higher, between the dark walls—up to the sky, into the grey—and through.

The eyes that had followed it came back to earth. They looked at each other and smiled gravely—two children who had seen a happy thing.

The child stood still with half-lifted hand. . . . A carriage drove quickly into the street. The little hand was lifted higher. It was a regal gesture—the return of the princess to earth.

James touched his hat—a look of dismay and relief battling in his face as he turned the horses sharply to the right. They paused in front of the stall, their hoofs beating dainty time to the coursing of their blood.

Achilles eyed them lovingly. The spirit of Athens dwelt in their arching necks.

He opened the door for the child with the quiet face and shining eyes. Gravely he salaamed as she entered the carriage.

Through the window she held out a tiny hand. "I hope you will come and see me," she said.

"Yes, I come," said Achilles, simply. "I like to come."

James dropped a waiting eye.

"Home, James."

The horses sprang away. Achilles Alexandrakis, bareheaded in the spring sunshine, watched the carriage till it was out of sight. Then he turned once more to the stall and rearranged the fruit. The swift fingers laughed a little as they worked, and the eyes of Achilles were filled with light.

III

BETTY'S MOTHER HEARS A STORY

"MOTHER-DEAR!" It was the voice of Betty Harris—eager, triumphant, with a little laugh running through it. "Mother-dear!"

"Yes—Betty—" The woman seated at the dark mahogany desk looked up, a little line between her eyes. "You have come, child?" It was half a caress. She put out an absent hand, drawing the child toward her while she finished her note.

The child stood by gravely, looking with shining eyes at the face bending above the paper. It was a handsome face with clear, hard lines—the reddish hair brushed up conventionally from the temples, and the skin a little pallid under its careful massage and skilfully touched surface.

To Betty Harris her mother was the

most beautiful woman in the world—more beautiful than the marble Venus at the head of the long staircase, or the queenly lady in the next room, forever stepping down from her gilded frame into the midst of tapestry and leather in the library. It may have been that Betty's mother was quite as much a work of art in her way as these other treasures that had come from the Old World. But to Betty Harris, who had slight knowledge of art values, her mother was beautiful, because her eyes had little points of light in them that danced when she laughed, and her lips curved prettily, like a bow, if she smiled.

They curved now as she looked up from her note. "Well, daughter?" She had sealed the note and laid it one side. "Was it a good lesson?" She leaned back in her chair, stroking the child's hand softly, while her eyes travelled over the quaint, dignified little figure. The child was a Velasquez—people had often remarked it, and the

mother had taken the note that gave to her clothes the regal air touched with simplicity. "So it was a good lesson, was it?" she repeated, absently, as she stroked the small dark hand—her own figure graciously outlined as she leaned back enjoying the lifted face and straight, clear eyes.

"Mother-dear!" The child's voice vibrated with the intensity behind it. "I have seen a man—a very *good* man!"

"Yes?" There was a little laugh in the word. She was accustomed to the child's enthusiasms. Yet they were always new to her—even the old ones were. "Who was he, daughter—this very good man?"

"He is a Greek, mother—with a long, beautiful name—I don't think I can tell it to you. But he is most wonderful—!" The child spread her hands and drew a deep breath.

"More wonderful than father?" It was an idle, laughing question—while she studied the lifted-up face.

"More wonderful than father—yes—" The child nodded gravely. "I can't quite tell you, mother-dear, how it feels—" She laid a tiny hand on her chest. Her eyes were full of thought. "He speaks like music, and he loves things—oh, very much!"

"I see— And did Madame Lewandowska introduce you to him?"

"Oh, it was not there." The child's face cleared with a swift thought. "I didn't tell you—Madame was ill—"

The reclining figure straightened a little in its place, but the face was still smiling. "So you and Miss Stone—"

"But Miss Stone is ill, mother-dear. Did you forget her toothache?" The tone was politely reproachful.

The woman was very erect now—her small eyes, grown wide, gazing at the child, devouring her. "Betty! Where have you been?" It was more a cry than a question—a cry of dismay, running swiftly toward terror. . . . It was the haunting fear of her life that Betty would some day be kidnapped, as the

child next door had been. . . . The fingers resting on the arm of the chair were held tense.

"I don't think I did wrong, mother." The child was looking at her very straight, as if answering a challenge. "You see, I walked home—"

"Where was James?" The woman's tone was sharp, and her hand reached toward the bell; but the child's hand moved softly toward it.

"I'd like to tell you about it myself, please, mother. James never waits for the lessons. I don't think he was to blame."

The woman's eyes were veiled with sudden mist. She drew the child close. "Tell mother about it."

Betty Harris looked down, stroking her mother's sleeve. A little smile of memory held her lips. "He was a beautiful man!" she said.

The mother waited, breathless.

"I was walking home, and I came to his shop—"

"To his shop!"

She nodded reassuringly. "His fruit-shop—and—oh, I forgot—" She reached into the little bag at her side, tugging at something. "He gave me these." She produced the round box and took off the lid, looking into it with pleased eyes. "Aren't they beautiful?"

The mother bent blindly to it. "Pomegranates," she said. Her lips were still a little white, but they smiled bravely with the child's pleasure.

"Pomegranates," said Betty, nodding. "That is what he called them. I should like to taste one—" She was looking at them a little wistfully.

"We will have them for luncheon," said the mother. She had touched the bell with quick decision.

"Marie"—she held out the box—"tell Nesmer to serve these with luncheon."

"Am I to have luncheon with you, mother-dear?" The child's eyes were on her mother's face.

"With me—yes." The reply was prompt—if a little tremulous.

The child sighed happily. "It is being a marvellous day," she said, quaintly.

The mother smiled. "Come and get ready for luncheon, and then you shall tell me about the wonderful man."

So it came about that Betty Harris, seated across the dark, shining table, told her mother, Mrs. Philip Harris, a happy adventure wherein she, Betty Harris, who had never before set foot unattended in the streets of Chicago, had wandered for an hour and more in careless freedom, and straying at last into the shop of a marvellous Greek—one Achilles Alexandrakis by name—had heard strange tales of Greece and Athens and the Parthenon—tales at the very mention of which her eyes danced and her voice rippled.

And her mother, listening across the table, trembled at the dangers the child touched upon and flitted past. It had been part of the careful rearing of

Betty Harris that she should not guess that the constant attendance upon her was a body-guard—such as might wait upon a princess. It had never occurred to Betty Harris that other little girls were not guarded from the moment they rose in the morning till they went to bed at night, and that even at night Miss Stone slept within sound of her breath. She had grown up happy and care-free, with no suspicion of the danger that threatened the child of a marked millionaire. She did not even know that her father was a very rich man—so protected had she been. She was only a little more simple than most children of twelve. And she met the world with straight, shining looks, speaking to rich and poor with a kind of open simplicity that won the heart.

Her mother, watching the clear eyes, had a sudden pang of what the morning might have been—the disillusionment and terror of this unprotected hour—that had been made instead a memory of delight—thanks to an unknown

Greek named Achilles Alexandrakis, who had told her of the beauties of Greece and the Parthenon, and had given her fresh pomegranates to carry home in a round box. The mother's thoughts rested on the man with a quick sense of gratitude. He should be paid a thousand times over for his care of Betty Harris—and for pomegranates.

"They are like the Parthenon," said the child, holding one in her hand and turning it daintily to catch the light on its pink surface. "They grew in Athens." She set her little teeth firmly in its round side.

IV

AND ACHILLES DREAMS

Achilles, in his little shop, went in and out with the thought of the child in his heart. His thin fingers flitted lightly among the fruit. The sadness in his face had given way to a kind of waking joy and thoughtfulness. As he made change and did up bags and parcels of fruit, his thoughts kept hovering about her, and his lips moved in a soft smile, half-muttering again the words he had spoken to her—praises of Athens, city of light, sky of brightness, smiles, and running talk. . . . It was all with him, and his heart was free. . . . How the child's eyes had followed the words, full of trust! He should see her again—and again. . . . Outside a halo rested on the smoky air . . . a little child, out of the rattle and din, had spoken to him. As he looked up, the

big, sooty city became softly the presence of the child. . . . The sound of pennies clinking in hurried palms was no longer harsh upon his ears; they tinkled softly—little tunes that ran. Truly it had been a wonderful day for Achilles Alexandrakis.

He paused in his work and looked about the little shop. The same dull-shining rows of fruit, the same spicy smell and the glowing disks of yellow light. He drew a deep, full breath. It was all the same, but the world was changed. His heart that had ached so long with its pent-up message of Greece —the glory of her days, the beauty of temples and statues and tombs—was freed by the tale of his lips. The world was new-born for him. He lifted the empty fig-box, from which the child had set free the butterfly that had hung imprisoned in its grey cocoon through the long winter, and placed it carefully on the shelf. The lettering traced along its side—"πεταλοῦδα"—was faded and dim; but he saw again the child's eyes

lifted to it—the lips half-parted, the eager question and swift demand—that he should tell her of Athens and the Parthenon—and the same love and the wonder that dwelt in his own heart for the city of his birth. It was a strange coincidence that the child should have come to him. Perhaps she was the one soul in the great, hurrying city who could care. They did not understand—these hurrying, breathless men and women—how a heart could ache for something left behind across the seas, a city of quiet, the breath of the Past—sorrow and joy and sweet life. . . . No, they could not understand! But the child— He caught his breath a little. . . . Where was she—in the hurry and rush? He had not thought to ask. . . . And she was gone! Only for a moment the dark face clouded. Then the smile flooded again. He should find her. . . . It might be hard—but he would search. . . . Had he not come down the long way of the Piræus to the sea—blue in the sun. Across the great

waters by ship, and the long miles by train. He should find her. . . . They would talk again. He laughed quietly in the dusky shop.

Then his eye fell upon it—the music-roll that had slipped quietly to the floor when her eager hand had lifted itself to touch the butterfly, opening and closing his great wings in the fig-box. He crossed to it and lifted it almost reverently, brushing a breath of dust from its leather sides. . . . He bent closer to it, staring at a little silver plate that swung from the strap. He carried it to the window, rubbing it on the worn black sleeve, and bending closer, studying the deep-cut letters. Then he lifted his head. A quick sigh floated from him. . . . Miss Elizabeth Harris, 108 Lake Shore Drive. . . . He knew the place quite well—facing the lake, where the water boomed against the great breakwater. . . . He would take it to her—tomorrow—the next day—next week, perhaps. . . . He wrapped it carefully away and laid it in a drawer to wait. She had asked him to come.

V

THE GREEK PROFESSOR LAUGHS

To Mrs. Philip Harris, in the big house looking out across the lake, the passing days brought grateful reassurance. . . . Betty was safe—Miss Stone was well again—and the man had not come. . . . She breathed more freely as she thought of it. The child had told her that she had asked him. But she had forgotten to give him her address; and it would not do to be mixed up with a person like that—free to come and go as he liked. He was no doubt a worthy man. But Betty was only a child, and too easily enamoured of people she liked. It was strange how deep an impression the man's words had made on her. Athens and Greece filled her waking moments. Statues and temples—photographs and books of travel loaded the school-room shelves. The house

reeked with Greek learning. Poor Miss Stone found herself drifting into archæology; and an exhaustive study of Greek literature, Greek life, Greek art filled her days. The theory of Betty Harris's education had been elaborately worked out by specialists from earliest babyhood. Certain studies, rigidly prescribed, were to be followed whether she liked them or not—but outside these lines, subjects were to be taken up when she showed an interest in them. There could be no question that the time for the study of Greek history and Greek civilisation had come. Miss Stone laboured early and late. Instruction from the university down the lake was pressed into service. . . . But out of it all the child seemed, by some kind of precious alchemy, to extract only the best, the vital heart of it.

The instructor in Greek marvelled a little. "She is only a child," he reported to the head of the department, "and the family are American of the newest type—you know, the Philip Harrises?"

The professor nodded. "I know—hide and hoof a generation back."

The instructor assented. "But the child is uncanny. She knows more about Greek than—"

"Than *I* do, I suppose." The professor smiled indulgently. "She wouldn't have to know much for that."

"It isn't so much what she *knows*. She has a kind of *feeling* for things. I took up a lot of those photographs today—some of the *later* period mixed in—and she picked them out as if she had been brought up in Athens."

The professor looked interested. "Modern educational methods?"

"As much as you like," said the instructor. "But it is something more. When I am with the child I am in Athens itself. Chicago makes me blink when I come out."

The professor laughed. The next day he made an appointment to go himself to see the child. He was a famous epigraphist and an authority in his subject. He had spent years in Greece—with his nose, for the most part, held

close to bits of parchment and stone.

When he came away, he was laughing softly. "I am going over for a year," he said, when he met the instructor that afternoon in the corridor.

"Did you see the little Harris girl?" asked the instructor.

The professor paused. "Yes, I saw her."

"How did she strike you?"

"She struck me dumb," said the professor. "I listened for the best part of an hour while she expounded things to me—asked me questions I couldn't answer, mostly." He chuckled a little. "I felt like a fool," he added, frankly, "and it felt good."

The instructor smiled. "I go through it twice a week. The trouble seems to be that she's alive, and that she thinks everything Greek is alive, too."

The professor nodded. "It's never occurred to her it's dead and done with these thousand years and more." He gave a little sigh. "Sometimes I've

wondered myself whether it is—quite as dead as it looks to you and me," he added. "You know that grain—wheat or something—that Blackman took from the Egyptian mummy he brought over last spring—"

"Yes, he planted it—"

"Exactly. And all summer he was tending a little patch of something green up there in his back yard—as fresh as the eyes of Pharaoh's daughter ever looked on—"

The instructor opened his eyes a little. This was a wild flight for the head epigraphist.

"That's the way she made me feel—that little Harris girl," explained the professor—"as if my mummy might spring up and blossom any day if I didn't look out."

The instructor laughed out. "So you're going over with it?"

"A year—two years, maybe," said the professor. "I want to watch it sprout."

VI

ACHILLES CALLS ON BETTY HARRIS

In another week Achilles Alexandrakis had made ready to call on Betty Harris. There had been many details to attend to—a careful sponging and pressing of his best suit, the purchase of a new hat, and cuffs and collars of the finest linen—nothing was too good for the little lady who had flitted into the dusky shop and out, leaving behind her the little line of light.

Achilles brushed the new hat softly, turning it on his supple wrist with gentle pride. He took out the music-roll from the drawer and unrolled it, holding it in light fingers. He would carry it back to Betty Harris, and he would stay for a while and talk with her of his beloved Athens. Outside the sun gleamed. The breeze came fresh from the lake. As he made his way up the

long drive of the Lake Shore, the water dimpled in the June sun, and little waves lapped the great stones, touching the ear with quiet sound. It was a clear, fresh day, with the hint of coming summer in the air. To the left, stone castles lifted themselves sombrely in the soft day. Grim or flaunting, they faced the lake—castles from Germany, castles from France and castles from Spain. Achilles eyed them with a little smile as his swift, thin feet traversed the long stones. There were turrets and towers and battlements frowning upon the peaceful, workaday lake. Minarets and flowers in stone, and heavy marble blocks that gripped the earth. Suddenly Achilles's foot slackened its swift pace. His eye dropped to the silver tag on the music-roll in his hand, and lifted itself again to a gleaming red-brown house at the left. It rose with a kind of lightness from the earth, standing poised upon the shore of the lake, like some alert, swift creature caught in flight, brought

to bay by the rush of waters. Achilles looked at it with gentle eyes, a swift pleasure lighting his glance. It was a beautiful structure. Its red-brown front and pointed, lifting roof had hardly a Greek line or hint; but the spirit that built the Parthenon was in it—facing the rippling lake. He moved softly across the smooth roadway and leaned against the parapet of stone that guarded the water, studying the line and colour of the house that faced him.

The man who planned it had loved it, and as it rose there in the light it was perfect in every detail as it had been conceived—with one little exception. On either side the doorway crouched massive grey-pink lions wrought in stone, the heavy outspread paws and firm-set haunches resting at royal ease. In the original plan these lions had not appeared. But in their place had been two steers—wide-flanked and short-horned, with lifted heads and nostrils snuffing free—something crude, brusque,

perhaps, but full of power and quick onslaught. The house that rose behind them had been born of the same thought. Its pointed gable and its façades, its lifted front, had the same look of challenge; the light, firm-planted hoofs, the springing head, were all there—in the soft, red stone running to brown in the flanks.

The stock-yard owner and his wife had liked the design—with no suspicion of the symbol undergirding it. The man had liked it all—steers and red-brown stone and all—but the wife had objected. She had travelled far, and she had seen, on a certain building in Rome, two lions guarding a ducal entrance. . . .

Now that the house was finished, the architect seldom passed that way. But when he did he swore at the lions, softly, as he whirred by. He had done a mighty thing—conceived in steel and stone a house that fitted the swift life out of which it came, the wind-swept place in which it stood, and all the stirding, troublous times about it. There it

rose in its spirit of lightness, head uplifted and nostrils sniffing the breeze—and in front of it squatted two stone lions from the palmy days of Rome. He gritted his teeth, and drove his machine hard when he passed that way.

But to Achilles, standing with bared head, the breeze from the lake touching his forehead, the lions were of no account. He let them go. The spirit of the whole possessed him. It was as if a hand had touched him lightly on the shoulder, in a crowd, staying him. A quick breath escaped his lips as he replaced his hat and crossed to the red-brown steps. He mounted them without a glance at the pink monsters on either hand. A light had come into his face. The child filled it.

The stiff butler eyed him severely, and the great door seemed ready to close of itself. Only something in the poise of Achilles's head, a look in his eyes, held the hinge waiting a grudging minute while he spoke.

He lifted his head a little; the look in

his eyes deepened. "I am called—Miss Elizabeth Harris—and her mother—to see," he said, simply.

The door paused a little and swung back an inch. He might be a great savant . . . some scholar of parts—an artist. They came for the child—to examine her—to play for her—to talk with her. . . . Then there was the music-roll. . . . It took the blundering grammar and the music-roll to keep the door open—and then it opened wide and Achilles entered, following the butler's stateliness up the high, dark hall. Rich hangings were about them, and massive pictures, bronzes and statues, and curious carvings. Inside the house the taste of the mistress had prevailed.

At the door of a great, high-ceiled room the butler paused, holding back the soft drapery with austere hand. "What name—for madame?" he said.

The clear eyes of Achilles met his. "My name is Achilles Alexandrakis," he said, quietly.

The eyes of the butler fell. He was

struggling with this unexpected morsel in the recesses of his being. Plain Mr. Alexander would have had small effect upon him; but Achilles Alexandrakis—! He mounted the long staircase, holding the syllables in his set teeth.

"Alexandrakis?" His mistress turned a little puzzled frown upon him. "What is he like, Conner?"

The man considered a safe moment. "He's a furriner," he said, addressing the wall before him with impassive jaw.

A little light crossed her face—not a look of pleasure. "Ask Miss Stone to come to me—at once," she said.

The man bowed himself out and departed on silken foot.

Miss Stone, gentle and fluttering and fine-grained, appeared a moment later in the doorway.

"He has come," said the woman, without looking up.

"He—?" Miss Stone's lifted eyebrows sought to place him—

"The Greek—I told you—"

"Oh— The Greek—!" It was slow

and hesitant. It spoke volumes for Miss Stone's state of mind. Hours of Greek history were in it, and long rows of tombs and temples—the Parthenon of gods and goddesses, with a few outlying scores of heroes and understudies. "The—Greek," she repeated, softly.

"The Greek," said the woman, with decision. "He has asked for Betty and for me. I cannot see him, of course."

"You have the club," said Miss Stone, in soft assent.

"I have the club—in ten minutes." Her brow wrinkled. "You will kindly see him—"

"And Betty—?" said Miss Stone, waiting.

"The child must see him. Yes, of course. She would be heart-broken—You drive at three," she added, without emphasis.

"We drive at three," repeated Miss Stone.

She moved quietly away, her grey gown a bit of shimmering in the gorgeous rooms. She had been chosen for

the very qualities that made her seem so curiously out of place—for her gentleness and unassuming dignity, and a few ancestors. The country had been searched for a lady—so much the lady that she had never given the matter a thought. Miss Stone was the result. If Betty had charm and simplicity and instinctive courtesy toward those whom she met, it was only what she saw every day in the little grey woman who directed her studies, her play, her whole life.

The two were inseparable, light and shadow, morning and night. Betty's mother in the house was the grand lady—beautiful to look upon—the piece of bronze, or picture, that went with the house; but Miss Stone was Betty's own—the little grey voice, a bit of heart-love, and something common and precious.

They came down the long rooms together, the child's hand resting lightly in hers, and her steps dancing a little in happy play. She had not heard the

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"They are two children together"

man's name. He was only a wise man whom she was to meet for a few minutes, before she and Miss Stone went for their drive. The day was full of light outside—even in the heavily draped rooms you could feel its presence. She was eager to be off, out in the sun and air of the great sea of freshness, and the light, soft wind on her face.

Then she saw the slim, dark man who had risen to meet her, and a swift light crossed her face. . . . She was coming down the room now, both hands outstretched, fluttering a little in the quick surprise and joy. Then the hands stayed themselves, and she advanced demurely to meet him; but the hand that lifted itself to his seemed to sing like a child's hand—in spite of the princess.

"I am glad you have come," she said. "This is Miss Stone." She seated herself beside him, her eyes on his face, her little feet crossed at the ankle. "Have you any new fruit to-day?" she asked, politely.

He smiled a little, and drew a soft,

flat, white bit of tissue from his pocket, undoing it fold on fold—till in the centre lay a grey-green leaf.

The child bent above it with pleased glance. Her eyes travelled to his face.

He nodded quietly. "I thought of you. It is the Eastern citron. See—" He lifted the leaf and held it suspended. "It hangs like this—and the fruit is blue—grey-blue like—" His eye travelled about the elaborate room. He shook his head slowly. Then his glance fell on the grey gown of Miss Stone as it fell along the rug at her feet, and he bowed with gracious appeal for permission. "Like the dress of madame," he said—"but warmer, like the sun—and blue."

A low colour crept up into the soft line of Miss Stone's cheek and rested there. She sat watching the two with slightly puzzled eyes. She was a lady—kindly and gracious to the world—but she could not have thought of anything to say to this fruit-peddler who had seemed, for days and weeks, to be

tumbling all Greek civilisation about her head. . . . The child was chatting with him as if she had known him always. . . . They had turned to each other again, and were absorbed in the silken leaf—the man talking in soft, broken words, the child piecing out the half-finished phrase with quick nod and gesture, her little voice running in and out along the words like ripples of light on some dark surface.

The face of Achilles had grown strangely radiant. Miss Stone, as she looked at it again, was almost startled at the change. The sombre look had vanished. Quick lights ran in it, and little thoughts that met the child's and laughed. "They are two children together," thought Miss Stone, as she watched them. "I have never seen the child so happy. She must see him again." . . . She sat with her hands folded in her grey lap, a little apart, watching the pretty scene and happy in it, but outside it all, untouched and grey and still.

VII

TO MEET THE "HALCYON CLUB"

OUTSIDE the door the horses pranced, champing a little at the bit, and turning their shining, arching necks in the sun. Other carriages drove up and drove away. Rich toilets alighted and mounted the red-brown steps—hats that rose, tier on tier, riotous parterres of flowers and feathers and fruit, close little bonnets that proclaimed their elegance by velvet knot or subtle curve of brim and crown. Colours flashed, ribbon-ends fluttered, delicately shod feet scorned the pavement. It was the Halcyon Club of the North Side, assembling to listen to Professor Addison Trent, the great epigraphist, who was to discourse to them on the inscriptions of Cnossus, the buried town of Crete. The feathers and flowers and boas were only surface deep. Beneath them beat an intense de-

sire to know about epigraphy—all about it. The laughing faces and daintily shod feet were set firmly in the way of culture. They swept through the wide doors, up the long carved staircase—from the Caracci Palace in Florence—into the wide library, with its arched ceiling and high-shelved books and glimpses of busts and pedestals. They fluttered in soft gloom, and sank into rows of adjustable chairs and faced sternly a little platform at the end of the room. The air of culture descended gratefully about them; they buzzed a little in its dim warmth and settled back to await the arrival of the great epigraphist.

The great epigraphist was, at this moment, three hundred and sixty-three and one-half miles—to be precise—out from New York. He was sitting in a steamer-chair, his feet stretched comfortably before him, a steamer-rug wrapped about his ample form, a grey cap pulled over his eyes—dozing in the sun. Suddenly he sat erect. The rug

fell from his person, the visor shot up from his eyes. He turned them blankly toward the shoreless West. This was the moment at which he had instructed his subconscious self to remind him of an engagement to lecture on Cretan inscriptions at the home of Mrs. Philip Harris on the Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, Illinois. He looked again at the shoreless West and tried to grasp it. It may have been his subconscious self that reminded him—it may have been the telepathic waves that travelled toward him out of the half-gloom of the library. They were fifty strong, and they travelled with great intensity—"Had any one seen him—?" "Where was he?" "What was wrong?" "Late!" "*Very* late!" "Such a punctual man!" The waves fluttered and spread and grew. The president of the club looked at the hostess. The hostess looked at the president. They consulted and drew apart. The president rose to speak, clearing her throat for a pained look. Then she waited. . . .

The hostess was approaching again, a fine resolution in her face. They conferred, looking doubtfully at the door. The president nodded courageously and seated herself again on the platform, while Mrs. Philip Harris passed slowly from the room, the eyes of the assembled company following her with a little look of curiosity and dawning hope.

VIII

AND GIVE A SIMPLE LECTURE

In the doorway below she paused a moment, a little startled at the scene. The bowed heads, the bit of folded tissue, the laughing, eager tones, the look in Miss Stone's face held her. . . . She swept aside the drapery and entered—the stately lady of the house.

The bowed heads were lifted. The child sprang to her feet. "Mother-dear! It is my friend! He has come!" The words sang.

Mrs. Philip Harris held out a gracious hand. She had not intended to offer her hand. She had intended to be distant and kind. But when the man looked up she somehow forgot. She held out the hand with a quick smile.

The Greek was on his feet, bending above it. "It is an honour, madame—that you come."

"I have come to ask a favour," she replied, slowly, her eyes travelling over the well-brushed clothes, the clean linen, the slender feet of the man. . . . Favour was not what she had meant to say—privilege was nearer it. . . . But there was something about him. . . . Her voice grew suave to match the words.

"My daughter has told me of you—" Her hand rested lightly on the child's curls—a safe, unrumpled touch. "Her visit to you has enchanted her. She speaks of it every day, of the Parthenon and what you told her."

The eyes of the man and the child met gravely.

"I wondered whether you would be willing to tell some friends of mine—here—now—"

He had turned to her—a swift look.

She replied with a smile. "Nothing formal—just simple things, such as you told the child. We should be very grateful to you," she added, as if she were a little surprised at herself.

He looked at her with clear eyes. "I

speak—yes—I like always—to speak of my country. I thank you."

The child, standing by with eager feet, moved lightly. Her hands danced in softest pats. "You will tell them about it—just as you told me—and they will love it!"

"I tell them—yes"

"Come, Miss Stone." The child held out her hand with a little gesture of pride and loving. "We must go now. Good-bye, Mr. Achilles. You will come again, please."

"I come," said Achilles, simply. He watched the quaint figure pass down the long rooms beside the shimmering grey dress, through an arched doorway at the end, and out of sight. Then he turned to his hostess with the quick smile of his race. "She is beautiful, madame," he said, slowly. "She is a child!"

The mother assented, absently. She was not thinking of the child, but of the fifty members of the Halcyon Club in the library. "Will you come?" she said. "My friends are waiting."

He spread his hands in quick assent. "I come—as you like. I give pleasure —to come."

She smiled a little. "Yes, you give pleasure." She was somehow at ease about the man. He was poor—illiterate, perhaps, but not uncouth. She glanced at him with a little look of approval as they went up the staircase. It came to her suddenly that he harmonised with it, and with all the beautiful things about them. The figure of Professor Trent flashed upon her—short and fat and puffing, and yearning toward the top of the stair. But this man. There was the grand air about him—and yet so simple. . . .

It was almost with a sense of éclat that she ushered him into the library. The air stirred subtly, with a little hush. The president was on her feet, introducing Mr. Achilles Alexandrakis, who, in the unavoidable absence of Professor Trent, had kindly consented to speak to them on the traditions and customs of modern Greek life.

Achilles's eyes fell gently on the lifted faces. "I like to tell you about my home," he said, simply. "I tell you all I can."

The look of strain in the faces relaxed. It was going to be an easy lecture—one that you could know something about. They settled to soft attention and approval.

Achilles waited a minute—looking at them with deep eyes. And suddenly they saw that the eyes were not looking at them, but at something far away—something beautiful and loved.

It is safe to say that the members of the Halcyon Club had never listened to anything quite like the account that Achilles Alexandrakis gave them that day, in the gloomy room of the red-fronted house overlooking the lake, of the land of his birth. They scarcely listened to the actual words at first, but they listened to him all lighted up from far away. There was something about him as he spoke—a sweeping rhythm that flew as a bird, reaching over great

spaces, and a simple joy that lilted a little and sang.

He drew for them the Parthenon—the glory of Athens—in column and statue and mighty temple and crumbling tomb. . . . A sense of beauty and wonder and still, clear light passed before them.

Then he paused . . . his voice laughed a little, and he spoke of his people. . . . Nobody could have quite told what he said to them about his people. But flutes sang. . . . The sound of feet was on the grass—touching it in tune—swift-flitting feet that paused and held a rhythmic measure while it swung. Quick-beating feet across the green. Shadowy forms. The sway of gowns, light-falling, and the call of voices low and sweet. . . . Greek youth and maid in swiftest play. They flung the branches wide and trembled in the voiceless light that played upon the grass. The foot of Achilles half-beat the time. . . . The tones filled themselves and lifted, slowly, surely. The voice quick-

ened—it ran with faster notes, as one who tells some eager tale. . . . Then it swung in cradling-song the twilight of Athens—and the little birds sang low, twittering underneath the leaves—in softest garb—at last—rose leaves falling—the dusky bats around her roof-tops, and the high-soaring sky that arches all—mysterious and deep. . . . Then the voice sank low, and rang and held the note—stern, splendid—Athens of might. . . . City of power! Glory, in clanging word, and in the lift of eye. . . . Athens on her hills, like great Jove enthroned—the shout, the triumph, the clash of steel, and the feet of Alaric in the streets. . . . The voice of the Greek grew hoarse now, tiny cords swelled on his forehead. . . . Athens, city of war. . . . Desolation, fire, and trampling—! His eye was drawn in light. . . . Vandal hand and iron foot! . . .

Who shall say how much of it he told—how much of it he spoke, and how much was only hinted or called up—in his voice and his gesture and his eye. . . .

They had not known that Athens was like this! They spoke in lowered voices, moving apart a little, and making place for the silver trays that began to pass among them. They glanced now and then at the dark man nibbling his biscuit absently and looking with unfathomable eyes into a teacup.

A large woman approached him, her ample bust covered with little beads that rose and fell and twinkled as she talked. "I liked your talk, Mr. Alexis, and I am going over just as soon as my husband can get away from his business." She looked at him with approval, waiting for his.

He bowed with deep, grave gesture. "My country is honoured, madame."

Other listeners were crowding upon them now, commending the fire-tipped words, felicitating the man with pretty gesture and soft speech, patronising him for the Parthenon and his country and her art. . . . The mistress of the house, moving in and out among them, watched the play with a little look of

annoyance. . . . He would be spoiled—a man of that class. . . . She glanced down at the slip of paper in her hand. . . . It bore the name, "Achilles Alexandrakis," and below it a generous sum to his order. She made her way toward him, and waited while he disengaged himself from the little throng about him and came to her, a look of pleasure and service in his face.

"You speak to me, madame?"

"I wanted to give you this." She slipped the check into the thin fingers. "You can look at it later—"

But already the fingers had raised it with a little look of pleased surprise. . . . Then the face darkened, and he laid the paper on the polished table between them. There was a quick movement of the slim fingers that pushed it toward her.

"I cannot take it, madame—to speak of my country. . . . I speak for the child—and for you." He bowed low. "I give pleasure to do it."

The next moment he had saluted her

with gentle grace and was gone from the room—from the house—between the stone lions and down the Lake Shore Drive, his free legs swinging in long strides, his head held high to the wind on the opal lake.

A carriage passed him, and he looked up. Two figures, erect in the sun, the breath of a child's smile, a bit of shimmer and grey, the flash and beat of quick hoofs—and they were gone. But the heart of Achilles sang in his breast, and the day about him was full of light.

IX

BETTY LEAVES HER GODS

Little Betty Harris sat in the big window, bending over her gods and goddesses and temples and ruins. It was months since, under the inspiration of the mysterious, fruit-dealing Greek, she had begun her study of Greek art; and the photographs gathered from every source—were piled high in the window—prints and tiny replicas and casts, and pictures of every kind and size—they overflowed into the great room beyond. She was busy now, pasting the photographs into a big book. To-morrow the family started for the country, and only as many gods could go as could be pasted in the book. Miss Stone had decreed it and what Miss Stone said must be done. . . . Betty Harris looked anxiously at Poseidon, and laid him down, in favour of

Zeus. She took him up in her fingers again, with a little flourish of the paste-tube, and made him fast. Poseidon must go, too. The paste-tube wavered uncertainly over the maze of gods and found another and stuck it in place, and lifted itself in admiring delight.

There was a little rustle, and the child looked up. Miss Stone stood in the doorway, smiling at her.

"I'm making my book for the gods," said the child, her flushed face lighting. "It's a kind of home for them." She slipped down from her chair and came across, holding the book outstretched before her. . . . "You see I've put Poseidon in. . . . . He never had a home—except just the sea, of course—a kind of wet home." She gave the god a little pat, regarding him fondly.

Miss Stone bent above the book, with the smile of understanding that always lay between them. . . . When Betty Harris thought about God, he seemed always, somehow, like Miss Stone's smile—but bigger—because he filled the

whole earth. . . . She lifted her hand and stroked the cheek bending above her book. . . . "I'm making a place for them all," she said. "It's a kind of story—" She drew a sigh of quick delight.

Miss Stone closed the book decisively, touching the flushed face with her fingers. "Put it away, child—and the pictures. We're going to drive."

"Yes—Nono." It was her own pet name for Miss Stone, and she gave a little quick nod, closing the book with happy eyes. But she waited a moment, hugging the book to her and looking at the scattered gods in the great window, before she walked demurely across and began gathering them up—a little puzzled frown between her eyes. "I suppose I couldn't leave them scattered around?" she suggested politely.

Miss Stone smiled a little head-shake, and the child bent again to her work. "I don't like to pick up," she said softly. "It's more interesting not to pick up—ever." She lifted her face

from a print of Apollo and looked at Miss Stone intently. . . . "There might be gods that could pick up—pick themselves up, perhaps—?" It was a polite suggestion—but there was a look in the dark face—the look of the meat-packer's daughter—something that darted ahead and compelled gods to pick themselves up. . . . . She bent again, the little sigh checking itself on her lip. . . . Miss Stone did not like to have little girls object—and it was not polite, and besides you *had* to take care of things—your own things. . . . The servants took care of the house for you, and bought you things to eat, and made beds for you, and fed the horses and ironed clothes. . . . . but your own things—the gods and temples and scrapbooks and paste that you left lying about—you had to put away yourself! . . . Her fingers found the paste-tube and screwed it firmly in place—with a little twist of the small mouth—and hovered above the prints with quick touch. . . . The servants did things—other things. Con-

stance mended your clothes and dressed you, and Marie served you at table, and sometimes she brought a nice little lunch if you were hungry—and you and Miss Stone had it together on the school table—but no one ever—ever—*ever*—picked up your playthings for you. She thrust the last god into his box and closed the lid firmly. Then she looked up. She was alone in the big room . . . . in the next room she could hear Miss Stone moving softly, getting ready for the drive. She slipped from her seat and stood in the window, looking out—far ahead the lake stretched—dancing with green waves and little white edges—and down below, the horses curved their great necks that glistened in the sun—and the harness caught gleams of light. The child's eyes dwelt on them happily. . . . They were her very own, Pollux and Castor—and she was going driving—driving in the sun. She hummed a little tune, standing looking down at them.

Behind her stretched the great room

—high-ceiled and wide, and furnished for a princess—a child princess. Its canopied bed and royal draperies had come across the seas from a royal house—the children of kings had slept in it before Betty Harris. The high walls were covered with priceless decoration—yet like a child in every line. . . . It was Betty's own place in the great house—and the little room adjoining, where Miss Stone slept, was a part of it, clear and fine in its lines and in the bare quiet of the walls. . . . Betty liked to slip away into Miss Stone's room—and stand very still, looking about her, hardly breathing. . . . It was like a church—only clearer and sweeter and freer . . . perhaps it was the woods . . . with the wind whispering up there. . . . She always held her breath to listen in Miss Stone's room; and when she came back, to her own, child's room—with its canopied bed and royal draperies and colour and charm, she held the stillness and whiteness of Miss Stone's room in her heart—

it was like a bird nestling there. Betty had never held a bird, but she often lifted her hands to them as they flew—and once, in a dream, one had fluttered into the lifted hands and she had held it close and felt the wind blow softly. It was like Miss Stone's room. . . . But Miss Stone was not like that. You could hug Nono and tell her secrets and what you wanted for luncheon—Sometimes she would let you have it—if you were good — *very* good — and Nono knew everything. She knew so much that Betty Harris, looking from her window, sighed softly. No one could know as much as Nono knew—not ever.

"All ready, Betty." It was Miss Stone in the doorway again. And with a last look down out of the window at the horses and the shimmering lake, the child came across the room, skipping a little. . . . "I should like to wear my hat with the cherries, please," she said. "I like to feel them bob in the sun when it shines—they bob so nicely—" She

paused with a quick look—"They *do* bob, don't they, Nono?"

"I don't think I ever noticed," said Miss Stone. She was still smiling as she touched the tumbled hair, putting it in place.

"But they *must* bob," said Betty. "I think I should have noticed your cherries bobbing, Miss Stone." She was looking intently at the quiet cheek close beside her own, with its little flush of pink, and the greyness of the hair that lay beside it. "I notice all your things, Nono," she said softly.

Miss Stone smiled again and drew her to her. "I will look to-day, Betty, when we drive—"

The child nodded—"Yes, they will bob then. I can see them—even with my eyes not shut, I can see them bob—Please, Constance—" She turned to the stiff maid who had come in—"I want my grey coat and red-cherry hat. We're going to drive—in the sun."

The maid brought the garments and

put them on with careful touch, tying the strings under the lifted chin.

The child nodded to her gaily. "Good-bye, Constance—we're going for a drive—a long drive—we shall go and go and go—Come, Miss Stone." She took the quiet hand, and danced a little, and held it close to her—down the long staircase and through the wide hall—and out to the sunshine and the street.

James, from his box, looked up, and the reins tightened in the big hands. The horses pranced and clicked their hoofs and stood still; and James, leaning a respectful ear, touched his hat-brim, and they were off, the harnesses glinting and the little red cherries bobbing in the sun.

X

FOR A LONG DRIVE

Betty Harris sat very still—her hands in her lap, her face lifted to the breeze that touched it swiftly and fingered her hair and swept past. Presently she looked up with a nod—as if the breeze reminded her. "I should like to see Mr. Achilles," she said.

"Not to-day," answered Miss Stone, "we must do the errands for mother to-day, you know."

The child's face fell. "I wanted to see Mr. Achilles," she said simply. She sat very quiet, her eyes on the lake. When she looked up, the eyes had brimmed over—"Why, Betty!"

"I didn't mean to," said the child. She was searching for her handkerchief and the little cherries bobbed forward . . . . "I didn't know they would spill!" She had found the handker-

chief now and was wiping them away, and she smiled at Miss Stone—a brave smile—that was going to be happy—

Miss Stone smiled back, with a little head-shake. "Foolish Betty!"

"I didn't expect them," said the child, "I was just thinking about Mr. Achilles and they came—just came!—They just came!" she repeated sternly. She gave a final dab to the handkerchief and stowed it away, sitting very erect and still.

Miss Stone's eyes studied her face. "We cannot go to-day," she said, "—and to-morrow we start for the country. Perhaps—" she paused, thinking it out.

But the child's eyes took it up—and danced. "He can make us a visit," she said, nodding—"a visit of three weeks!" She smiled happily.

Miss Stone smiled back, shaking her head. "He could not leave the fruit-shop—"

But the child ignored it. "He will come," she said quickly, "and we shall

talk—and talk—about the gods, you know—" She lifted her eyes, "and we shall go in the fields—He will come!" She drew a deep sigh of satisfaction and lifted her head. . . . .

And Miss Stone, watching her, had a feeling of quick relief. She had known for a day or two that the child was not well, and they had hurried to get away to the fields. This was their last drive. To-morrow the horses would be sent on; and the next day they would all go—in the great touring car that would eat up the miles, and pass the horses, and reach Idlewood long before them.

No one except Betty and Miss Stone used the horses now. They would have been sold long ago had it not been for the child. The carriage was a part of her—and the clicking hoofs and soft-shining skins and arching necks. The sound of the hoofs on the pavement played little tunes for Betty. Her mother had protested against expense, and her father had grumbled a little; but if the child wanted the carriage

rather than the great car that could whir her away in a breath, it must be kept.

It made a pretty picture this morning as it turned into the busier street and took its way among the dark, snouting cars that pushed and sped. It was like a delicate dream that shimmered and touched the pavement—or like a breath of the past . . . . . and the great cars skimmed around it and pushed on with quick honk and left it far behind.

But the carriage kept its way with unhurried rhythm—into the busy street and out again into a long avenue where great houses of cement and grey stone stood guard.

No one was in sight, up and down its clear length—only the morning sun shining on the grey stones and on the pavement—and the little jingling in the harness and the joyous child and the quiet grey woman beside her.

"I shall not be gone a minute, Betty," said Miss Stone. The carriage had drawn up before the great shadow of a

house. She gave the child's hand a little pat and stepped from the carriage.

But at the door there was a minute's question and, with a nod to Betty, she stepped inside.

When the door opened again, and she came out with quick step she glanced at her watch—the errand had taken more than its minute, and there were others to be done, and they were late. She lifted her eyes to the carriage—and stopped.

The coachman, from the corner of his eye, waited for orders. But Miss Stone did not stir. Her glance swept the quiet street and came back to the carriage—standing with empty cushions in the shadow of the house.

The coachman turned a stolid eye and caught a glimpse of her face and wheeled quickly—his eye searching space. "There wa'n't nobody!" he said. He almost shouted it, and his big hands gripped hard on the reins. . . . His face was grey—"There wa'n't nobody here!" he repeated dully.

But Miss Stone did not look at him. "Drive to the Greek's. You know—where she went before." She would not give herself time to think—sitting a little forward on the seat—of course the child had gone to the Greek—to Mr. Achilles. . . . They should find her in a minute. There was nothing else to think about—no shadowy fear that had leaped to meet the look in James's face when it turned to her. The child would be there—

The carriage drew up before the shop, with its glowing lines of fruit under the striped awning, and Miss Stone had descended before the wheel scraped the curb, her glance searching the door and the dim room beyond. She halted on the threshold, peering in.

A man came from the rear of the room, his hands outstretched to serve her. The dark, clear face, with its Greek lines, and the eyes that looked out at her held a welcome. "You do me honour," he said. "I hope Madame is well—and the little Lady—?"

Then he stopped. Something in Miss Stone's face held him—and his hand groped a little, reaching toward her—"You—tell me—" he said.

But she did not speak, and the look in her face grew very still. . . .

He turned sharply—calling into the shop behind him, and a boy came running, his eyes flashing a quick laugh, his teeth glinting.

"I go," said the man, with quick gesture—"You keep shop—I go." He had taken off his white apron and seized a hat. He touched the woman on the shoulder. "Come," he said.

She looked at him with dazed glance. . . . And put her hand to her head. "I cannot think," she said slowly.

He nodded with steady glance. "When we go, you tell—we find her," he said.

She started then and looked at him—and the clear colour came to her face. "You know—where—she is!"

But he shook his head. "We find

her," he repeated. "You tell."

And as they threaded the streets—into drays and past clanging cars and through the tangle of wheels and horses and noise—and she told him the story, shouting it above the rumble and hurry of the streets, into the dark ear that bent beside her.

The look in Achilles's face deepened, but its steady quiet did not change. "We find her," he repeated each time, and Miss Stone's heart caught the rhythm of it, under the hateful noise. "We find her. . . ."

Then the great house on the lake faced them.

She looked at him a minute in doubt. Her face broke—"She may have come—home?" she said.

"I go with you," said Achilles.

There was no sign of life, but the door swung open before them and they went into the great hall—up the long stairway that echoed only vacant softness, and into the library with its ranging rows of perfect books. She motioned

him before her. "*I* must tell them," she said. She passed through the draperies of another door and the silence of the great house settled itself about the man and waited with him.

XI

TWO MEN FACE EACH OTHER

He looked about the room with quiet face. It was the room he had been in before—the day he spoke to the Halcyon Club—the ladies with costly gowns and strange hats, who had listened so politely while he told them of Athens and his beloved land. The room had been lighted then, with coloured lamps and globes—a kind of rosy radiance. Now the daylight came in through the high windows and filtered down upon him over brown books and soft, leather-covered walls. There was no sound in the big room. It seemed shut off from the world and Achilles sat very quiet, his dark face a little bent, his gaze fixed on the rug at his feet. He was thinking of the child—and of her face when she had lifted it to him out of the crowded street, that first day, and smiled at

him. . . . . and of their long talks since. It was the Child who understood. The strange ladies had smiled at him and talked to him and drank their tea and talked again . . . he could hear the soft, keen humming of their voices and the flitter of garments all about him as they moved. But the child had sat very still—only her face lifted, while he told her of Athens and its beauty . . . and he had told her again—and again. She would never tire of it—as he could never tire. . . . . She was a child of light in the great new world. . . . a child like himself—in the hurry of the noise. . . . . A sound came to him in the distant house—people talking—low voices that spoke and hurried on. . . . The house was awake—quick questions ran through it—doors sounded and were still. Achilles turned his face toward the opening into the long wide hall, and waited. Through the vista there was a glimpse of the stairway and a figure passing up it—a short, square man who hurried. Then silence again—more

bells and running feet. But no one came to the library—and no one sought the dark figure seated there, waiting. . . . . Strange foreign faces flashed themselves in the great mirror and out. The outer door opened and closed noiselessly to admit them—uncouth figures that passed swiftly up the stairway, glancing curiously about them—and dapper men who did not look up as they went. . . . . The house settled again to quiet, and the long afternoon, while Achilles waited. The light from the high windows grew dusky under chairs and tables; it withdrew softly along the gleaming books and hovered in the air above them—a kind of halo—and the shadows crept up and closed about him. Through the open door, a light appeared in the hall. A moving figure had turned it on suddenly. The figure advanced to the library, and paused in the doorway, and came in. There was a minute's fumbling at the electric button, and the soft lights came, by magic, everywhere in the room. . . . The serv-

ant gave a quick glance about him, and started sternly—and came forward. . . . Then he recognised the man. It was the Greek. But he looked at him sternly. The day had been full of suspicion and question—and the house was alive to it—"What do you want?" he said harshly.

"I wait," said Achilles.

"Who told you to come?" demanded the man.

"I come. I wait," said Achilles.

The man disappeared. Presently he returned. "You come with me," he said. His look was less stern, but he raised his voice a little, as if speaking to a child, or a deaf man. "You come with me," he repeated.

Achilles followed with quick-gliding foot—along the corridor, through a great room—to a door. The man paused and lifted his hand and knocked. His back was tense, as if he held himself ready to spring.

A voice sounded and he turned the handle softly, and looked at Achilles.

Then the door opened and the Greek passed in and the man closed the door behind him.

A man seated at a table across the room, looked up. . . . For a minute the two men looked at each other—the one short and square and red; the other thin as a reed, with the dark, clear eyes.

The short man spoke first. "What do you know about this?" His hand pressed a heap of papers upon the desk before him and his eyes searched the dark face.

Achilles's glance rested on the papers —then it lifted itself.

"Your name is Achilles?" said the other sharply.

"Achilles Alexandrakis—yes." The Greek bowed.

"I know—she called you Mr. Achilles," said the man.

A shadow rested on the two faces, looking at each other.

"She is lost," said the father. He said it under his breath, as if denying it.

"I find her," said Achilles quietly.

The man leaned forward—something like a sneer on his face. "She is stolen, I tell you—and the rascals have got at their work quick!" He struck the pile of papers on the desk. "They will give her up for ten thousand dollars—to-night." He glanced at the clock on the wall, ticking its minutes, hurrying to six o'clock.

The dark eyes had followed the glance; they came back to the man's face—"You pay that—ten thousand dollar?" said Achilles.

"I shall be damned first!" said the man with slow emphasis. "But we shall find them—" His square, red jaw held the words, "and *they* shall pay—God! they shall pay!" The room rang to the word. It was a small bare room—only the table and two chairs, the clock on the wall and a desk across the room. "Sit down,' said Philip Harris. He motioned to the chair before him.

But Achilles did not take it, he rested a hand on the back, looking down at him. "I glad—you not pay," he said.

The other lifted his eyebrows. "I shall pay the man that finds her—the man that brings her back! You understand that!" His bright, little glance had keen scorn.

But the face opposite him did not change. "I find her," said Achilles again.

"Then you get the ten thousand," said the man. He shifted a little in his chair. They were all alike—these foreigners—money was what they wanted—and plenty of it. The sneer on his face deepened abruptly.

Achilles's glance was on the clock. "It makes bad—to pay that money," he said. "When you pay—more child stole—to-morrow, more child stole—more money—" His dark hand lifted itself out over the houses of the great city—and all the sleepy children making ready for bed.

The other nodded. His round, soft paunch pressed against the table and his quick eyes were on Achilles's face. His great finger leaped out and shook

itself and lay on the table. "I—will—not—give—one cent!" he said hoarsely.

"You be good man," said Achilles solemnly.

"I will not be bullied by them—and I will not be a fool!" He lifted his eyes to the clock—and a look passed in his face—a little whirring chime and the clock was still.

In the silence, the telephone rang sharply. His hand leaped out—and waited—and his eye sought Achilles—and gathered itself, and he lifted the dark, burring Thing to his ear.

XII

THE TELEPHONE SPEAKS

Slowly the look on his face grew to something hard and round and bright. . . . His lips tightened—"is that all?—Good-bye!" His voice sounded in the tube and was gone, and he hung up the receiver. "They make it twenty thousand—for one hour," he said drily.

Achilles bent forward, his face on fire, his finger pointing to the Thing.

"They are right there!" said the man. He gave a short laugh—"Can't trace them that way—we have tried—They've tapped a wire. Central is after them. But they won't get 'em—that way. . . . Sit down and I will talk to you." He motioned again to the chair and the Greek seated himself, bending forward a little to catch the murmur and half-incoherent jerks that the man spoke.

Now and then the Greek nodded, or his dark face lighted; and once or twice he spoke. But for the most part it was a rapid monologue, told in breathless words.

The great Philip Harris had no hope that the ignorant man sitting before him could help him. But there was a curious relief in talking to him; and as he talked, he found the story shaping itself in his mind—things related fell into place, and things apart came suddenly together. The story ran back for years—there had been earlier attempts, but the child had been guarded with strictest care; and lately they had come to feel secure. They had thought the band was broken up. The blow had fallen out of a clear sky. They had not the slightest clue—all day the detectives had gathered the great city in their hands—and sifted it through careful fingers. A dozen men had been arrested, but there was no clue. The New York men were on the way; they would arrive in the morning, and meantime the

great man sat in his bare room, helpless. He looked into the dark eyes opposite him and found a curious comfort there... "The child knew you," he said.

"Yes—she know me. We love," said Achilles simply.

The other smiled a little. It would not have occurred to *him* to say that Betty loved him. He was not sure that she did—as he thought of it. . . . She had always the quick smile for him—and for everyone. But there had been no time for foolishness between him and Betty. He had hardly known her for the last year or two. He shifted a little in his place, shading his eyes from the light, and looked at the Greek.

The Greek rose and stood before him. "I go now," he said.

Philip Harris made no reply. He was thinking, behind his hand; and his mind, wrenched from its stockyards and its corners and deals, seemed to be groping toward a point of light that glimmered somewhere—mistily. He could not focus it. The darkness tricked him,

but somehow, vaguely, the Greek held a clue. . . . He had known the child. "Don't go," said Philip Harris, looking up at last.

"I find her," said Achilles.

Philip Harris shook his head. "You cannot find her." He said it bitterly. "But you can tell me—sit down." He leaned forward. "Now, tell me—everything—you know—about her."

The face of Achilles lighted. "She was a nice child," he said blithely.

The man smiled. "Yes—go on."

So the voice of Achilles was loosened and he told of Betty Harris—to her father sitting absorbed and silent. The delight of her walk, her little hands, the very tones of her voice were in his words.

And the big man listened with intent face. Once the telephone rang and he stopped to take down something. "No clue," he said, "go on." And Achilles's voice took up the story again.

His hands reached out in the words, quick gestures made a halo about them,

lips and smiles spoke, and ran the words to a laugh that made the child's presence in the room.

The father listened dumbly. Then silence fell in the room and the clock ticked.

And while the two men sat in silence, something came between them and knit them. . . . And when Achilles rose to go, the great man held out his hand, simply. "You have helped me," he said. . . .

"I help—yes—" said Achilles. Then he turned his head. A door across the room had opened and a woman stood in it—looking at them.

XIII

EVERYONE MUST PAY

Achilles saw her, and moved forward swiftly. But she ignored him—her eyes were on the short, square man seated at the table, and she came to him, bending close. "You must pay, Phil," she said. The words held themselves in her reddened eyes, and her fingers picked a little at the lace on her dress . . . then they trembled and reached out to him—"You *must* pay!" she said hoarsely.

But the man did not stir.

The woman lifted her eyes and looked at Achilles. There was no recognition in the glance—only a kind of impatience that he was there. The Greek moved toward the door—but the great man stayed him. "Don't go," he said. He reached up a hand to his wife, laying it on her shoulder. "We can't pay, dearest," he said slowly.

Her open lips regarded him and the quick tears were in her eyes. She brushed them back, and looked at him—"Let *me* pay!" she said fiercely, "I will give up—everything—and pay!" She had crouched to him, her groping fingers on his arm.

Above her head the glances of the two men met.

Her husband bent to her, speaking very slowly . . . to a child.

"Listen, Louie—they might give her back to-day—if we paid . . . but they would take her again—to-morrow—next week—next year. . . . We shall never be safe if we pay. . . . Nobody will be safe—"

Her face was on his arm, sobbing close. . . . "I hate—it!" she said brokenly, "I *hate*—your—money! I want Betty!" The cry went through the room—and the man was on his feet, looking down at her—

"Don't, Louie," he said—"don't, dear—I can't bear that! . . . See, dear—sit down!" He had placed her in the

chair and was crooning to her, bending to her. . . . "We shall have her back—soon—now. . ."

The telephone was whirring and he sprang to it—

The woman lifted her face, staring at it. . . .

The Greek's deep eyes fixed themselves on it. . . .

The room was so still they could hear the tiny, ironic words flinging themselves spitefully in the room and biting upon the air—"Time's up," the Thing tittered—"Make it fifty thousand now—for a day. . . . Fifty thousand down and child delivered safe—Br-r-r-r!"

The woman sprang forward—"Tell them we'll pay, Phil—give it to me—Yes—yes—we'll pay!" She struggled a little—but the hand had thrust her back and the receiver was on its hook. "We shall *not* pay!" said the man sternly, "not if they make it a million!"

"I think they make it a million," said Achilles quietly.

They looked up at him with startled eyes.

"They know you—rich—" his hands flung themselves. "So rich! They *make* you pay—yes—they make everyone pay, I think!" His dark eyes were on the woman significantly—

"What do you mean?" she said swiftly.

"If you pay—they steal them everywhere—little children. . . ." His eyes seemed to see them at play in the sunshine—and the dark shadows stealing upon them. . . . The woman's eyes were on his face, breathless. . . .

"They have taken Betty!" she said. It was a broken cry.

"We find her," said Achilles simply. . . . "Then little children play—happy." He turned to go.

But the woman stayed him. Her face trembled to hold itself steady under his glance—"I want to save the children, too," she said. "I will be brave!"

Her husband's startled face was

turned to her and she smiled to it bravely. "Help me, Phil!" she said. She reached out her hands to him and he took them tenderly. . . . He had not been so near her for years. She was looking in his face, smiling still, across the white line of her lip. "I shall help," she said slowly. "But you must not trust me, dear—not too far. . . . I want my little girl—"

There were tears in the eyes of the two men—and the Greek went softly out, closing the door. Down the wide hallway—out of the great door, with its stately carvings and the two pink stone lions that guarded the way—out to the clear night of stars. The breeze blew in—a little breath from the lake, that lapped upon the breakwater and died out. Achilles stood very still—lifting his face to it. . . . Behind him, in the city, little children were asleep . . . and in the great house the man and the woman waited alone—for the help that was coming to them—running with

swift feet in the night. It sped upon iron rails and crept beneath the ground and whispered in the air—and in the heart of Achilles it dreamed under the quiet stars.

XIV

THE PRICE ACHILLES PAID

The little shop was closed. The fruit-trays had been carried in and the shutters put up, and from an upper window a line of light gleamed on the deserted street. Achilles glanced at it and turned into an alley at the side, groping his way toward the rear. He stopped and fumbled for a knob and rapped sharply. But a hand was already on the door, scrambling to undo it, and an eager face confronted him, flashing white teeth at him. "You come!" said the boy swiftly.

He turned and fled up the stairs and Achilles followed. A faint sense of onions was in the air. Achilles sniffed it gratefully. He remembered suddenly that he had not eaten since morning. But the boy did not pause for him—he was beckoning with mysterious hand

from a doorway and Achilles followed. "Alcie—got hurt," whispered the boy. He was trembling with fear and excitement, and he pointed to the bed across the room.

Achilles stepped, with lightest tread, and looked down. A boy, half asleep, murmured and turned his head restlessly. A red-clotted blur ran along the forehead, and the face, streaked with mud, was drawn in a look of pain—As Achilles bent over him, the boy cried out and threw up a hand; then he turned his head, muttering, and dozed again.

Achilles withdrew lightly, beckoning to the boy beside him.

Yaxis followed, his eyes on the figure on the bed—"All day," he said, "he lie sick."

Achilles closed the door softly and turned to him. "Tell me, Yaxis, what happened," he said.

The boy's face opened dramatically. "I look up—I see Alcie—like that—" his gesture flitted to the room—"He stand in door—all covered mud—blood

run—cart broke—no fruit—no hat." The boy's hands were everywhere, as he spoke, dispensing fruit, smashing carts and filling up the broken words with horror and a flow of blood. Achilles's face grew grave. . . . The Greeks were not without persecution in the land of freedom, and his boy had lain all day suffering—while he had been lost in the great house by the lake.

He took off his coat and turned back his sleeves. "You bring water," he said gently. "We will see what hurts him."

But the boy had put his supper on the table and was beckoning him with swift gesture. "You eat," he said pleadingly. And Achilles ate hastily and gave directions for the basin of water and towels and a sponge, and the boy carried them into the room beyond.

Half an hour later Alcibiades lay in bed, his clothes removed and the blood washed from his face and hair. The clotted line still oozed a little on the temple and the look of pain had not gone

away. Achilles watched him with anxious eyes. He bent over the bed and spoke to him soothingly, his voice gentle as a woman's in its soft Greek accents; but the look of pain in the boy's face deepened and his voice chattered shrill. . . . .

They watched the ambulance drive away from in front of the striped awning. Achilles held a card in his thin fingers—a card that would admit him to his boy. Yaxis's eyes were gloomy with dread, and his quick movements were subdued as he went about the business of the shop, carrying the trays of fruit to the stall outside and arranging the fruit under the striped awning. He was not to go out with the push-cart today. There was too much work to do—and Achilles could not let the boy go from him. . . . Later, too, Achilles must go to the hospital—and to the big house on the lake, and someone must be left with the shop.

So he kept the boy beside him, look-

ing at him, now and then, with deep, quiet eyes that seemed to see the city taking its toll of life—of children—the children at play and the children at work. . . . . This land that he had sought with his boys—where the wind of freedom blew fresh from the prairies and the sea. . . . . and even little children were not safe! He seemed to see it—through the day—this great monster that gathered them in—from all lands—and trod them beneath its great feet, crushing them, while they lifted themselves to it and threw themselves—and prayed to it for the new day—that they had come so far to seek.

But when Achilles presented his ticket for the boy, at the hospital door, it was a woman of his own race who met him, dark-eyed and strong—and smiled at him a flash of sympathy. "Yes—he is doing well. They operated at once. . . . Come and see. But you must not speak to him." She led him cautiously down the long corridor between the beds—"See, he is asleep." She bent over

him, touching the bandage. Beneath it, the dark skin was pallid, but the breath came easily from the sleeping lips.

She smiled at Achilles, guiding him from the room, ignoring the tears that looked at her. "He is doing well, you see. It was pressure that caused the fever, the bone was not injured. He will recover quickly. Yes. We are glad!"

And Achilles, out under the clear sky, raised his face and caught the sound of the city—its murmured, innumerable toil and the great clang of wheels turning. . . . And he drew a deep, quick breath. . . . A city of power and swift care for its own. . . . The land of many hands reaching out to the world. . . . And Achilles's head lifted itself under the sky; and a mighty force knit within him—a deep, quiet force out of the soul of the past—pledging itself.

XV

THE POLICE MOVE

Life was busy for Achilles. There were visits to the hospital—where he must not speak to his boy, but only look at him and catch little silent smiles from the bandaged face—and visits to the great house on the lake, where he came and went freely. The doors swung open of themselves, it seemed, as Achilles mounted the steps between the lions. All the pretty life and flutter of the place was changed. Detectives went in and out; and instead of the Halcyon Club, the Chief of Police and assistants held conferences in the big library. But there was no clue to the child! . . . She had withdrawn, it seemed, into a clear sky. James had been summoned to the library many times, and questioned sharply; but his wooden countenance held no light and the tale did not

change by a hair. He had held the horses. Yes—and there wa'n't nobody—but little Miss Harris and him. . . . She was in the carriage—he held the horses. The horses? They had frisked a bit, maybe, the way horses will—at one o' them autos that squirted by, and he had quieted 'em down—but there wa'n't nobody. . . . And he was the last link between little Betty Harris and the world—all the bustling, wrestling, interested world of Chicago—that shouted extras and stared at the house on the lake and peered in at its life—at the rising and eating and sleeping that went on behind the red-stone walls. The red-stone walls had thinned to a veil and the whole world might look in—because a child had been snatched away; and the heart of a city understood. But no one but James could have told what had happened to the child sitting with her little red cherries in the light; and James was stupid—and in the bottomless abyss of James's face the clue was lost.

Achilles had come in for his share of questioning. The child had been to his shop, it seemed. . . . and the papers took it up and made much of it—there were headlines and pictures. . . . the public was interested. The tale grew to a romance, and fathers and mothers and children in Boston and New York and London heard how Betty had sat in the gay little fruit-shop—and listened to Achilles's stories of Athens and Greece, and of the Acropolis—and of the studies in Greek history, and her gods and goddesses and the temples and ruins lying packed in their boxes waiting her return. The daily papers were a thrilling tale—with the quick touch of love and human sympathy that brings the world together.

To Achilles it was as if the hand of Zeus had reached and touched the child—and she was not. What god sheltered her beneath a magic veil—so that she passed unseen? He lifted his face, seeking in air and sun and cloud, a token. Over the lake came the great

breeze, speaking to him, and out of the air a thousand hands reached to him—to tell him of the child. But he could not find the place that held her. In the dusky shop, he held his quiet way. No one, looking, would have guessed—"Two cen's, yes," and his swift fingers made change while his eyes searched every face. But the child, in her shining cloud, was not revealed.

When he was summoned before the detectives and questioned, with swift sternness, it was his own questions that demanded answer—and got it. The men gathered in the library, baffled by the search, and asking futile, dreary questions, learned to wait in amusement for the quick, searching gestures flung at them and the eager face that seemed to drink their words. Gradually they came to understand—the Greek was learning the science of kidnapping—its methods and devices and the probable plan of approach. But the Chief shook his head. "You won't trace these men by any of the old tricks. It's a new

deal. We shall only get them by a fluke." And to his own men he said, "Try any old chance, boys, run it down—if it takes weeks—Harris won't compromise—and you may stumble on a clue. The man that finds it makes money." Gradually they drew their lines around the city; but still, from the tapped wires, the messages came—to them, sitting in conclave in the library—to Philip Harris in his bare office and to the mother, waiting alone in her room.

At last she could not bear it. "I cannot hold out, Philip," she said, one day, when he had come in and found her hanging up the receiver with a fixed look. "Don't trust me, dear. Take me away." And that night the big car had borne her swiftly from the city, out to the far-breathing air of the plain and the low hills. In her room in the house on the lake, her little telephone bell tinkled, and waited, and rang again—baffled by long silence and by discreet replies. . . . The tapped

wires concentrated now upon Philip Harris, working by suggestion, and veiled threat, on his overwrought nerves till his hand shook when he reached out to the receiver—and his voice betrayed him in his denials. They were closing on him, with hints of an ultimatum. He dared not trust himself. He left the house to the detectives and went down to the offices, where he could work and no one could get at him. Every message from the outside world came to him sifted, and he breathed more freely as he took up the telephone. The routine of business steadied him. In a week he should be himself—he could return to the attack.

Then a message got through to him—up through the offices. The man who delivered it spoke in a clear, straight voice that did not rise or fall. He had agreed to give the message, he said—a hundred thousand paid to-day, or no communication for three months. The child would be taken out of the country. The men behind the deal were

getting tired and would drop the whole business. They had been more than fair in the chances they had offered for compromise. . . . . There was a little pause in the message—then the voice went on, "I am one of your own men, Harris, inside the works—a man that you killed—in the way of business. I agreed to give you the message—for quits. Good-bye." The voice rang off and Philip Harris sat alone.

A man that he had killed—in the way of business—! . . . . . Hundreds of them—at work for him—New York—Cincinnati—St. Louis. It would not be easy—to trace a man that he had killed in business. . . . .

So he sat with bent head, in the circle of his own works . . . the network he had spread over the land—and somewhere, outside that circle, his child, the very heart, was held as hostage—three months. . . . Little Betty! He shivered a little and got up and reached for a flask of brandy and poured it out, gulping it down. He looked about the

room. . . . inside now. He had shut himself in his citadel. . . . and they were inside. The brandy stayed his hand from shaking—but he knew that he had weakened. . . . . His mind went back to the man he had "killed in business"—the straight, clear voice sounding over the 'phone—he had not wanted to ruin him—them, hundreds of them—It was the System—kill or be killed. . . . He took his chance and they took theirs—and they had gone down.

XVI

A CLUE GOES TO SLEEP

THE morning was alive in the hospital. The sun glinted in. Pale faces, lifted on their pillows, turned toward it; and Achilles, passing with light step between the rows, smiled at them. Alcibiades was better. They had told him, in the office, that he might talk to him to-day—a little while—and his face glowed with the joy of it.

The boy hailed him, from far down the ward, his weak voice filled with gladness, and Achilles hurried. He dropped into the chair beside him and took the thin hand in his strong, dark one, holding it while he talked—gentle words, full of the morning and of going home. The boy's eyes brightened, watching his father's face.

"Pain—gone," he said, "—all gone." His hand lifted to his forehead.

Achilles bent forward and touched it lightly, brushing the hair across it. "You are well now," he said gratefully.

The boy smiled, his dark eyes fixed absently on his thoughts. "They—bad men!" he said abruptly.

Achilles leaned forward with anxious look, but the boy's eyes were clear. "They run down," he said quietly, "—and go fast—like wind—I try—I run. They shout and hit cart—and swear—and I lie on ground. . . ." His lifted eyes seemed to be looking up at some great object passing close above him . . . and a look of dread held them. He drew a quick breath. "They bad men—" he said. "Little girl cry!"

Achilles bent forward, holding his breath. "What was it—Alcie?"

The boy's eyes turned toward him trustingly. "They hurt bad," he said. "I try—I run—"

"And the little girl—?" suggested Achilles gently. His voice would not have turned the breath of a dream; but Alcibiades wrinkled his forehead. "She

cry—" he said. "She look at me and cry—quick—They hurt that little girl —Yes—she cry—" His eyes closed sleepily. The nurse came forward.

"Better not talk any more," she said.

Achilles got to his feet. He bent over the boy, his heart beating fast. "Good-bye, Alcie. To-morrow you tell me more—all about the little girl. . ." The words dropped quietly into the sleeping ear and the boy turned his face. . . . . "To-morrow—tell—about—little girl . . . . ." he murmured—and was asleep.

Achilles passed swiftly out of the hospital—through the sun-glinting wards, out to the free air—his heart choking him. At the corner, he caught a car bound for the South side and boarded it.

And at the same moment Philip Harris, in his office in the works, was summoning the Chief of Police to instruct him to open negotiations with the kidnappers.

But Achilles reached the office first

and before noon every member of the force knew that a clue had been found—a clue light as a child's breath between sleep and waking, but none the less a clue—and to-morrow more would be known.

So Philip Harris stayed his hand—because of the muttered, half-incoherent word of a Greek boy, drowsing in a great sunny ward, the millionaire waited—and little children were safer that night.

XVII

PHILIP HARRIS WAKES UP

But the surgeon, the next morning, shook his head peremptorily. . . . His patient had been tampered with, and was worse—it was a critical case—all the skill and science of modern surgery involved in it . . . . . the brain had barely escaped—by a breath, it might be—no one could tell . . . . . but the boy must be kept quiet. There must be no more agitation. They must wait for full recovery. Above all—nothing that recalled the accident. Let nature take her own time—and the boy might yet speak out clearly and tell them what they wanted—otherwise the staff could not be responsible.

It was to Philip Harris himself that the decree was given, sitting in the consulting-room of the white hospital—looking about him with quick eyes. He

had taken out his cheque-book and written a sum that doubled the efficiency of the hospital, and the surgeon had thanked him quietly and laid it aside. "Everything is being done for the boy, Mr. Harris, that we can do. But one cannot foresee the result. He may come through with clear mind—he may remember the past—he may remember part of it—but not the part you want. . . . . But not a breath must disturb him—that is the one thing clear—and it is our only chance." His eyes were gentle and keen, and Philip Harris straightened himself a little beneath them. The cheque, laid one side, looked suddenly small and empty . . . . . and the great stockyards were a blur in his thought. . . . Not all of them together, it seemed, could buy the skill that was being given freely for a Greek waif, or hurry by a hair's breadth the tiny globule of grey matter that held his life.

"Tell me if there is anything I can do," he said. He had risen and was facing the surgeon, looking at him

like a little boy—with his hat in his hand.

The surgeon returned the look. "There will be plenty to do, Mr. Harris. This, for instance—" He took up the cheque and looked at it and folded it in slow fingers. "It will be a big lift to the hospital . . . . and the boy—there will be things later—for the boy—"

"Private room?" suggested the great man.

"No—the ward is better. It gives him interests—keeps his mind off himself and keeps him from remembering things. But when he can be moved, he must be in the country—good food, fresh air, things to amuse him—he's a jolly little chap!" The surgeon laughed out. "Oh, we shall bring him through." He added it almost gaily. "He is so sane—he is a Greek!"

Philip Harris looked at him, uncomprehending. "How long before he can be moved?" he asked bluntly.

The surgeon paused—"two weeks—three—perhaps—I must have him under

my eye—I can't tell—" He looked at the great man keenly. "What he really needs, is someone to come in for awhile everyday—to talk with him—or keep quiet with him—someone with sense."

"His father?" said Philip Harris.

"Not his father. It must be someone he has never seen—no memories to puzzle him—yet. But someone that he might have known always—all his life."

"That is Miss Stone," said Philip Harris promptly.

"Does he know Miss Stone?" asked the surgeon.

Philip Harris shook his head. "No one knows Miss Stone," he said; "but she is the friendliest person in all the world—when I get to heaven, I hope Marcia Stone will be there to show me around—just to take the edge off." He smiled a little.

"Well, she is the person we want—can she come?"

"She sits at home with her hands folded," said Philip Harris. He waited a minute. "She was my little

Philip Harris enjoyed it as if he were playing with the stock exchange of a world

girl's friend," he said at last. "They were always together."

"I remember—" The surgeon held out his hand. "Let her come. She will be invaluable." His voice had a friendly ring. It was no longer a millionaire that faced him—handing out cheques—but a father, like himself. There were four of them at home, waiting on the stairs for him to come at night—and he suddenly saw that Philip Harris was a brave man—holding out for them all—waiting while the little fleck of grey matter knit itself. He looked at him a minute keenly—"Why not come in yourself, now and then," he said, "as he gets better? Later, when you take him away, he will know you—better for him."

So the ward became familiar with the red face and Prince Albert coat and striped trousers and patent leather shoes, crunching softly down the still, white room. It was a new Philip Harris, sauntering in at noon with a roll of pictures—a box of sweets, enough candy

to ruin the ward—a phonograph under one arm and a new bull pup under the other. The pup sprawled on the floor and waked happy laughs up and down the ward and was borne out, struggling, by a hygienic nurse, and locked in the bathroom. The phonograph stayed and played little tunes for them—jolly tunes, of the music hall, and all outdoors. And Philip Harris enjoyed it as if he were playing with the stock exchange of a world. The brain that could play with a world when it liked, was devoted now, night and day, to a great hospital standing on the edge of the plain, and to the big free ward, and to a dark face, flashing a smile when he came.

XVIII

"ONCE—I—SAW—"

Miss Stone sat by the boy on the lawn at Idlewood. A great canopy of khaki duck was spread above them, and the boy lay on a wicker couch that could be lifted and carried from place to place as the wind or the sun, or a whim directed.

Five days they had been here—every day full of sunshine and the fragrance of flowers from the garden that ran along the terraces from the house to the river bank, and was a riot of midsummer colour and scent. . . . The boy's face had gained clear freshness and his eyes, fixed on Miss Stone's face, glowed. "I like—it—here," he said.

"Yes, Alcie." Miss Stone bent toward him. "You are getting strong every day—you will soon be able to walk—to-morrow, perhaps." She

glanced at the thin legs under their light covering.

The boy laughed a little and moved them. "I can walk now—" he declared.

But she shook her head. "Now I will tell you a story. . . ." So her voice went on and on in the summer quiet—insects buzzed faintly, playing the song of the day. Bees bumbled among the flowers and flew past, laden. The boy's eyes followed them. The shadow of a crow's wing dropped on the grass and drifted by. The summer day held itself . . . and Miss Stone's voice wove a dream through it.

When the boy opened his eyes again she was sitting very quiet, her hands in her lap, her eyes fixed on the river that flowed beyond the garden. . . . . The boy's eyes studied her face. . . . "Once—I—saw—you—" he said. His hand stole out and touched the grey dress.

Miss Stone started. They had

waited a long time—but not for this—"Yes—Alcie—once you saw me—go on—"

"—saw you—in a carriage," finished Alcie, with quick smile "You ride straight — you — straight — now." He looked at her with devoted eyes.

"Yes." She was holding her breath, very evenly—and she did not look at him, but at the distant river. They seemed held in a charm—a word might break it.

The boy breathed a happy sigh—that bubbled forth—"I like it—here," he said dreamily. . . . . Should she speak?

The long silence spread between them. The bird sang in the wood—a clear, mid-summer call.

The boy listened, and turned his eyes. "A little girl—with you then," he said softly, "in carriage. . . . Where is little—girl?" It was the first question he had asked.

She swayed a little—in her grey softness—but she did not look at him, but

at the river. "You would like that little girl, Alcie," she said quietly. "We all love her. Some day you shall see her—only get well and you shall see her." It was a soft word, like a cry, and the boy looked at her with curious eyes.

"I get well," he said contentedly, "I see her." He slipped a hand under his cheek and lay quiet.

"Doing well," said the surgeon, "couldn't be better." He had run down for the day and was to go back in the cool evening.

He stood with Philip Harris on the terrace overlooking the river. Harris threw away a stump of cigar. . . . "You think he will make complete recovery?"

"No doubt of it," said the surgeon promptly.

"Then—?" Philip Harris turned a quick eye on him.

But the man shook his head. "Wait," he said—and again, slowly, "Wait."

The darkness closed around them, but they did not break it. A faint questioning honk sounded, and Philip Harris turned. "The car is ready," he said, "to take you back."

XIX

A WOMAN IN THE GARDEN

"When it comes, it may come all at once," the surgeon had said, "—and overwhelm him. Better lead up to it—if we can—let him recall it—a bit here—a bit there—feel his way back—to the old place—to himself."

"Where my child is," said Philip Harris.

"Where your child is," repeated the surgeon, "and that clue runs through the frailest, intangiblest matter that fingers ever touched." He had looked down at his own thin, long, firm fingers as if doubting that they could have held that thread for a moment and left it intact.

Philip Harris moved restively a little, and came back. "There has not been a word for seven weeks," he said, "—not a breath—"

"They told you—?" said the surgeon.

"That they would wait three months! Yes!" Philip Harris puffed fiercely. "It is hell!" he said.

"The boy is better," said the surgeon. "You have only to wait a little longer now."

And he had whirred away in the great car—to the children that needed him, and Idlewood had settled, in its charmed stillness, into the night. . . . . No one would have guessed that it was a state of siege there—the world passed in and out of the big gates—automobiles and drays and foot passengers, winding their way up to the low, rambling house that wandered through the flowers toward the river and the wood. Windows were open everywhere and voices sounded through the garden.

In one of the rooms, darkened to the light, the mistress of the house lay with closed eyes. She could not bear the light, or the sound of voices—listening always to hear a child's laugh among them—the gay little laugh that ran

toward her in every room, and called.

She had shut herself away, and only Philip Harris came to the closed room, bringing her news of the search, or sitting quietly by her in the darkness. But for weeks there had been no news, no clue. The search was baffled. . . . They had not told her of the Greek boy and the muttered words.

"Better not trouble her," the physician had urged. "She cannot bear disappointment—if nothing comes of it."

And no word filtered through to the dim room . . . . and all the clues withdrew in darkness.

Out in the garden Alcibiades and Miss Stone worked among the flowers. It was part of the cure—that they should work there among growing things every day—close to the earth—and his voice sounded happily as they worked.

The woman in the closed room turned her head uneasily. She listened a moment. Then she called . . . . Marie stood in the doorway.

"Who is *there*—Marie—in the garden?"

The maid stole to the window and peered through the shutters. She came back to the bed. "It's a boy," she said, "—a Greek boy—and Miss Stone."

"Why is he here?" asked the woman, querulously.

The maid paused—discreet. She knew—everyone except the woman lying with closed eyes—knew why the boy was here. . . . . She bent and adjusted the pillow, smoothing it. "He is someone Mr. Harris sent down," she said, "—someone to get well. . . ."

There was no reply. The woman lay quiet. "I want to get up, Marie," she said at last. "It is stifling here."

"Yes, Madame."

The windows were opened a little—the light came in slowly, and Mrs. Philip Harris stepped at last into the loggia that led from her windows—out toward the garden. Grapevines climbed the posts and tendril shadows were on the ground beneath. They rested on the

frail figure moving under them toward the light.

Marie hovered near her, with pillows and a sunshade, and her face full of care.

But the woman waved her back. "I do not need you, Marie. Here—I will take the sunshade. Now, go back." She moved on slowly. The voices had died away. In the distance, she saw Miss Stone, moving toward the wood, alone. She paused for a moment, watching the grey figure—a little cloud passed across her face. She had not seen Miss Stone—since. . . . . She did not blame her—but she could not see her. . . . . She moved on slowly, the light from the sunshade touching the lines in her face and flushing them softly . . . . Suddenly she stopped. On a low couch, a little distance away, a boy lay asleep. . . . . She came up to him softly and stood watching him. . . . There was something in the flushed face, in the childish, drooping lip and tossed hair—that reminded her. . . . Slowly she

sank down beside him, hardly breathing.

All about them, the summer went on—the quiet, gentle warmth and the fresh scent of blossoms. . . . The boy murmured a little, and threw out an arm, and slept on. The woman's eyes watched the sleeping face. Something mysterious was in it—a look of other worlds. . . . It was the look of Betty—at night . . . when she lay asleep. . . . It certainly was from some other world. The woman bent forward a little. . . . The dark eyes opened—and looked at her—and smiled. The boy sat up. "I sleep," he said.

He rubbed his eyes, boyishly, smiling still to her. "I very sleepy," he said. "I work." He rubbed his arms. "I work hard."

She questioned him and moved a little away, and he came and sat at her feet, telling her of himself—with quiet slowness—As she questioned him he told her—all that he knew. . . . And they chatted in the sunshine—subtly drawn

to each other—happy in something they could not have said.

The boy had grown refined by his illness—the sturdy hands that had guided the push-cart had lost their roughened look and seemed the shape of some old statue; and the head, poised on the round throat, was as if some old museum had come to life and laughed in the sun. If Mrs. Philip Harris had seen Alcibiades shoving his cart before him, along the cobbled street, his head thrown back, his voice calling "Ban-an-nas!" as he went, she would not have given him a thought. But here, in her garden, in the white clothes that he wore, and sitting at her feet, it was as if the gates to another world had opened to them—and both looked back together at his own life. . . . . The mystery in the boy's eyes stirred her—and the sound of his voice . . . . there was something in it . . . beauty, wonder—mystery. . . . She drew a quick breath . . . . . "I think I will go in," she said, and the boy lifted himself to

help her—and only left her, under the loggia, with a quick, grateful flash of the dark smile.

Mrs. Philip Harris slept that night—the chloral, on the little table beside her, untouched. And the next day found her in the garden.

All the household watched—with quickened hope. . . . The mistress of the house had taken up her life, and the old quick orders ran through the house . . . . . And no one spoke of the child. It was as if she were asleep—in some distant room—veiled in her cloud. But the house came back to its life. Only, the social groups that had filled it every summer were not there. . . . But there was the Greek boy, in the garden, and Miss Stone, and Philip Harris whirring out at night and sitting on the terrace in the dusk, the light of his cigar glimmering a little, as he watched the Greek boy flung on the ground at his feet, his eyes playing with the stars. He knew them all by name under the skies of Greece. Achilles had taught them to

him; and he counted them, like a flock, as he lay on the terrace—rolling out the great Greek names while they girdled the sky above him in a kind of homely chant.

When the boy had gone to bed Philip Harris remained smoking thoughtfully and looking still at the stars. He had had a long talk with the surgeon to-day and he had given his consent. The boy was well, he admitted—as well as he was likely to be—perhaps. Give him three more days—then, if nothing happened, they might question him.

Philip Harris threw away his cigar—and its glimmering light went out in the grass. Overhead the great stars still circled in space, travelling on toward the new day.

XX

THE TEST IS MADE

"I WILL ask the questions," Achilles had said, in his quiet voice, and it had been arranged that he should come to Idlewood when the surgeon gave the word.

He arrived the next night, stepping from the car as it drew up before the door, and Alcibiades, standing among the flowers talking with Miss Stone, saw him and started and came forward swiftly. . . . . He had not known that his father was coming—he ran a little as he came nearer and threw himself in his arms, laughing out.

Achilles smiled—a dark, wistful smile. "You are grown strong," he said. He held him off to look at him.

The boy's teeth gleamed—a white line, "To-morrow we go home?" he re-

plied. "I am all well—father—well now!"

But Achilles shook his head. "To-morrow we stay," he replied. "I stay one day — two days — three —" He looked at the boy narrowly—"Then we go home."

The boy smiled contentedly and they moved away. Early the next morning he was up before Achilles, calling to him from the garden to hurry and see the flowers before the mist was off them, and showing him, with eager teeth, his own radishes—ready to pull—and little lines of green lettuce that sprang above the earth. "I plant," said the boy proudly. "I make grow." He swung his arm over the whole garden.

Achilles watched him with gentle face, following him from bed to bed and stooping to the plants with courteous gesture. . . . . It was all like home. They had never been in a garden before—in this new land . . . . the melons and berries and plums and peaches and pears that came crated into the little

fruit-shop had grown in unknown fields—but here they stretched in the sun; and the two Greeks moved toward them with laughing, gentle words and quick gestures that flitted and stopped, and went on, and gathered in the day. The new world was gathering its sky about them; and their faces turned to meet it. . . . . And with every gesture of the boy, Achilles's eyes were on him, studying his face, its quick colour running beneath the tan, and the clear light of his eyes. Indoors or out, he was testing him; and with every gesture his heart sang. His boy was well . . . and he held a key that should open the dark door that baffled them all. . . . When he spoke, that door would open for them—a little way, perhaps—only a little way—but the rest would be clear. And soon the boy would speak.

In the house Philip Harris waited; and with him the chief of police, detectives and plain-clothes men—summoned hastily—waited what should develop. They watched the boy and his father,

from a distance, and speculated and made guesses on what he would know; for weeks they had been waiting on a sick boy's whim—held back by the doctor's orders. They watched him moving across the garden—his quick, supple gestures, his live face—the boy was well enough! They smoked innumerable cigars and strolled out through the grounds and sat by the river, and threw stones into its sluggish current, waiting while hours went by. . . . Since the ultimatum—a hundred thousand for three months—not a line had reached them, no message over the whispering wires—the child might be in the city, hidden in some safe corner; she might be in Europe, or in Timbuctoo. There had been time enough to smuggle her away. Every port had been watched, but there was the Canadian line stretching to the north, and the men who were "on the deal" would stop at nothing. . . . They had been approached, tentatively, in the beginning, for a share of profits; but they had scorned the overture. "Catch me—if you can!" the voice laughed and

rang off. The police were hot against them. . . . Just one clue—the merest clue—and they would run it to earth—like bloodhounds. They chewed the ends of their cigars and waited . . . and in the garden the boy and his father watched the clouds go by and talked of Athens and gods and temples and sunny streets. Back through the past, carefree they went—and at every turn the boy's memory rang true. . . . "Do you remember, Alcie—the little house below the Temple of the Winds—" Achilles's eyes were on his face—and the boy's face laughed—"Yes—father. That house—" quick running words that tripped themselves—"where I stole—figs—three little figs. . . . You whipped me then!" The boy laughed and turned on his side and watched the clouds and the talk ran on . . . coming closer at last, across the great Sea, through New York and the long hurrying train, into the grimy city—on the shore of the lake—the boy's eyes grew wistful. . . . "I go home—with you—father—?" he said. It was a quick

question and his eyes flashed from the garden to his father's face.

"Do you want to go home, Alcie?" The face smiled at him. "Don't you like it here?" A gesture touched the garden.

"I like—yes. I go home—with you," he said simply.

"You must stay till you are strong," said the father, watching him. "You were hurt, you know. It takes time to get strong. . . . You remember that you were hurt. . . .?"

The words dropped slowly, one by one, and the day drowsed. The sun—warm as Athens—shone down, waiting while the boy turned slowly on his side . . . his eyes had grown dark. . . . "I try—remember. . . ." His voice was half a whisper, "—but it runs—away!" The eyes seemed to be straining to see something beyond them—through a veil.

Achilles's hand passed before them and shut them off. . . . "Don't try, Alcie. Never mind—it's all right. Don't mind!"

But the boy had thrown himself forward with a long cry, sobbing. . . . "I—want—to—see," he said, "It—hurts—here." His fingers touched the faint line along his forehead. And Achilles bent and kissed it, and soothed him, talking low words—till the boy sat up, a little laugh on his lips—his grief forgotten.

So the detectives went back to the city—each with his expensive cigar—cursing luck. And Achilles, after a day or two, followed them. "He will be better without you," said the surgeon. "You disturb his mind. Let him have time to get quiet again. Give nature her chance."

So Achilles returned to the city, unlocking the boy's fingers from his. "You must wait a little while," he said gently. "Then I come for you." And he left the boy in the garden, looking after the great machine that bore him away—an unfathomable look in his dark, following eyes.

XXI

A CONNOISSEUR SPEAKS

THE next day it rained. All day the rain dripped on the roof and ran down the waterspouts, hurrying to the ground. In her own room the mistress of the house sat watching the rain and the heavy sky and drenched earth. . . . . The child was never for a minute out of her thoughts . . . her fancy pictured gruesome places, foul dens where the child sat—pale and worn and listless. . . . . Did they tie her hands? Would they let her run about a little—and play? But she could not play—a child could not play in all the strangeness and sordidness. . . . . The mother had watched the dripping rain too long. . . . It seemed to be falling on coffins. She crept back to the fire and held out her hands to a feeble blaze that flickered up, and died out. . . . Why did not

Marie come back? It was three o'clock—where was Marie? She looked about her and held out her hands to the blaze and shivered—there was fire in her veins, and beside her on the hearth the child seemed to crouch and shiver and reach out thin hands to the warmth . . . . . Phil had said they would not hurt her! . . . But what could a man know? He did not know the sensitive child-nature that trembled at a word. . . And she was with rough men—hideous women—longing to come home—wondering why they did not come for her and take her away . . . . dear child! . . . . How cruel Phil was! She crouched nearer the fire, her eyes devouring it—her thoughts crowding on the darkness . . . . Those terrible men had been silent seven weeks—more than seven—desperate weeks . . . . not a word out of the darkness—and she could not cry out to them—perhaps they would not tap the wires again—! The thought confronted her and she sprang up and walked wildly, her pulses beating in her

temples. . . . . She stopped by a table and looked down. A little vial lay there, and the medicine dropper and wine glass—waiting. She turned her head uneasily and moved away. She must save it for the night—for the dark hours that never passed. . . . But she must think of something! She glanced about her, and rang the bell sharply, and waited.

"I want the Greek boy," she said, "send him to me!"

"Yes, madame." Marie's voice hurried itself away . . . and Alcibiades stood in the door, looking in.

The woman turned to him—a little comfort shining in the sleepless eyes, "Come in," she said, "I want to talk to you—tell me about Athens—the sun shines there!" She glanced again at the hearth and shivered.

The boy came in, flashing a gleam through the dark day. The little sadness of the night before had gone. He was alive and lithe and happy. He came over to her, smiling . . . . . and

she looked at him curiously—"What have you been doing all day?" she asked.

"I play—" said Alcibiades, "I play—on flute—" His fingers made little music gestures at his lips, and fell away, "And I—run—" he said, "I go in rain—and run—and come in." He shook his dark head. Little gleams of moisture shone from it. The earth seemed to breathe about him.

She drew a quick breath. "You shall tell me," she said, "but not here—" She glanced about the room filled with sickness and wild thoughts—not even the boy's presence dispelled them. "We will go away somewhere—to the gallery," she said quickly, "it is lighter there. . . . and I have not been there—for weeks." Her voice dropped a little.

The boy followed her through the hall, across a covered way, to the gallery that held the gems—and the refuse—that Philip Harris had gathered up from the world. She looked about her with a proud, imperious gesture. She

knew—better now than when the pictures were purchased—which ones were good, and which were very bad; but she could not interfere with the gallery. It was Philip's own place in the house. It had been his fancy—to buy pictures—when the money came pouring in faster than they could spend it—and the gallery was his own private venture—his gymnasium in culture! She smiled a little. Over there, a great canvas had been taken down and carted off to make room for the little Monticelli in its place. He was learning—yes! But she could not bring guests to the gallery when they came to Idlewood for the day. . . . If he would only let a connoisseur go through the place and pick out the best ones—the gallery was not so bad! She looked about her with curious, tolerant smile.

The boy's gaze followed hers. He had not been in this big room, with the high-reaching skylight, and the varicoloured pictures and grey walls. His dark eyes went everywhere—and flashed

smiles and brought a touch-stone to the place. Eyes trained to the Acropolis were on the pictures; and the temples of the gods spoke in swift words or laughed out in quick surprise.

The mistress of the house followed him, with amused step. If Phil could only hear it! She must manage somehow—Phil was too shrewd and practical not to see how true the boy was—and how keen! That great Thing—over the fireplace—Chicago on her throne, with the nations prostrate before her—how the boy wondered and chuckled—and questioned her—and brought the colour to her face! . . . Philip had stood before the picture by the hour—entranced; the man who painted it had made a key to go with it, and Philip Harris knew the meaning of every line and figure—and he gloried and wallowed in it. "That is a picture with some sense in it!" was his proudest word, standing before it and waving his hand at the vision on her throne. She was a lovely lady—a little like his wife, Philip Har-

ris thought. Perhaps the artist had not been unaware of this. Certainly Mrs. Philip Harris knew it, and loathed the Thing. The boy's words were like music to her soul, under the skylight with the rain dripping softly down. . . . She had thought of covering the thing up—a velvet curtain, perhaps. But she had not quite dared yet. . . . . Across the room another picture was covered by a curtain—the velvet folds sweeping straight in front of it, and covering it from top to bottom. Only the rim of the gilt frame that reached to the ceiling, glimmered about the blue folds of the curtain. . . . . The boy's eyes had rested on the curtained picture as they passed before it, but Mrs. Philip Harris had not turned her head. She felt the boy's eyes now—they had wandered to it again, and he stood with half-parted lips, as if something behind the curtain called to him. She touched him subtly and drew his attention—and he followed her a minute . . . . then his attention wandered and he

"It is Betty—my little girl"

gazed at the deep folds in the curtain with troubled eyes. She hesitated a moment—and her hand trembled. It was as if the curtain were calling her, too, and she moved toward it, the boy beside her. . . . . They did not speak—they moved blindly and paused a breath . . . . the rain falling on the skylight. The boy flashed a smile to her. . . . "I have not seen it," he said.

She reached out her hand then and drew back the curtain. "It is Betty—my little girl—" she said, "she has gone away—" She was talking aimlessly—to steady her hands. But the boy did not hear her—he had stumbled a little—and his eyes were on the picture—searching the roguish smile, the wide eyes, the straight, true little figure that seemed stepping toward them—out from behind her curtain . . . . . The mother's eyes feasted on it a moment hungrily and she turned to the boy. But he did not see—his gaze was on the picture—and he took a step—and looked—and drew his hand across

his eyes with a little breath. Then he reached out his hands, "—I—see—her," he said swiftly. "She look at me—on ground—she cry—" His face worked a minute—then it grew quiet and he turned it toward her. "I see—her," he repeated slowly.

She had seized his shoulder and was questioning him, forcing him toward the picture, calling the words into his ear as if he were deaf, or far away—and the boy responded slowly—truly, each word lighting up the scene for her—the great car crashing upon him, the overthrow of his cart, the scattered fruit on the ground, and the Greek boy crawling toward it—thrust forward as the car pushed by—and his swift, upward glance of the girl's face as it flashed past, and of the men holding her between them—"She cry," he said—as if he saw the vision again before him, "She cry—and they stop—hands." He placed both hands across his mouth, shutting out words and cry.

And the mother fondled him and cried

to him and questioned him again. *She* had no fear—no knowledge of what might hang in the balance—of the delicate grey matter that trembled at her strokes . . . no surgeon would have dared question so sternly, so unsparingly. But the delicate brain held itself steady and the boy's eyes were turned to her—piecing her broken words, answering them before they came—as if she drew them forth at will—

The door opened and she looked up and sprang forward. . . . "Listen, Phil. He saw Betty!" Her hand trembled to the boy. "He *saw* her—*that last day*—it must be—tell him, Alcie—"

The boy was looking at him smiling quietly, and nodding to him.

Philip Harris closed the door with set face.

XXII

"WHAT DID YOU SEE?"

"WHAT did you see—boy?" Philip Harris stood with his legs well apart, looking at him.

The boy answered quietly, his quick gesture running to the picture above them, and filling out his words. . . . He had gathered the story of the child as the mother had gathered his—and his voice trembled a little, but it did not falter in the broken words.

Philip Harris drew a deep breath. "Would you know these men?" he asked.

"I know them—yes." The clear eyes were on his face.

Philip Harris glanced up. The rain on the skylight had ceased, but the room was full of dusk. . . . "There is not time," he said, "to-night— You must rest now, and have your dinner and go

to bed. . . . To-morrow there will be men to question you. You must tell them what you have told us."

"I tell them," said the boy simply, "—what I see."

So the boy slept quietly . . . . and through the night, messages ran beneath the ground, they leaped out and struck wires—and laughed . . . Men bent their heads to listen . . . . and spoke softly and hurried. Cars thrust themselves forth, striking at the miles—their great bulk sliding on. The world was awake—gathering itself . . . toward the boy.

In the morning they questioned him—they set down his answers with quick, sharp jerks that asked for more. And the boy repeated faithfully all that he had told; and the surgeon sitting beside him watched with keen eyes—and smiled. . . . The boy would hold. He was sound. But they must be careful . . . and after a little he sent him into the garden to work—while the men compared notes and sent despatches and the

story travelled into the world, tallying itself against the face of every rogue. But there were no faces that matched it—no faces such as the boy had cherished with minute care . . . . as if the features had been stamped—one flashing stroke—upon his brain, and disappeared. There could be no doubt of them—the description of the child was perfect—red cherries, grey coat—and floating curls. . . . He seemed to see the face before him as he talked—and the face of the big man at her left, with red moustache and sharp chin—and the smaller man beside her, who had clapped his hand across her mouth and glared at the boy on the ground—his eyes were black—yes, and he wore a cap—pulled down, and collar up—you only saw the eyes—black as. . . . The boy had looked about him a minute, and pointed to the shoes of the chief of police gleaming in the sunlight—patent leathers, and dress suit, hurried away from a political banquet the night before. The men smiled

and the pencils raced. . . . There had been another man who drove the machine, but the boy had not noticed him—his swift glance had taken in only the child, it seemed, and the faces that framed her.

A little later they drove into the city—the boy accompanying them, and the surgeon and Achilles, who had hurried out with the first news and had listened to his son's story with dark, silent eyes. He sat in the car close to Alcibiades, one hand on the back of the seat, the other on the boy's hand. Through the long miles they did not speak. The boy seemed resting in his father's strength. It was only when they reached the scene of his disaster that he roused himself and pointed with quick finger—to the place where he had fallen. . . . . He was pushing his cart—so—and he looked up—quick—and his cart went—so!—and all his fruit, and he was down—looking up—and the car went by, close. . . . Which way?— He could not tell

that—no. . . . He shut his eyes—his face grew pale. . . . He could not tell . . . . .

The street forked here—it might have been either way—by swerving a little. . . . And the police looked wise and took notes and reporters photographed the spot and before night a crowd had gathered about it, peering hopefully at the pavement where Alcibiades had lain, and pointing with eager fingers to bits of peel—orange and banana— scattered by the last passer-by, and gazing at dark stains on the pavement—something that might be marks of blood—after ten weeks of rain and mud and dust!

Achilles and the boy returned to the shop. "I want to go home," the boy had said, as the car turned away, "I—go—home—with you, father." So they had drawn up at the little fruit shop; and Yaxis in the door, his teeth gleaming, had darted out to meet them, hovering about them and helping his

brother up the stairs and out to the verandah that ran across the windows at the rear. Down below, in tin-can backyards of the neighbours, old bottles and piles of broken lumber filled the place; but along the edge of the verandah, boxes of earth had been set, and vines ran to the top, shutting out the glare of the brick walls opposite and making a cool spot in the blank heat.

Alcibiades looked at the vines with happy eyes. "They grow," he said softly.

Yaxis nodded and produced a pot of forget-me-nots. He had been tending them for three weeks—for Alcie. They bent over the pot, blue with blossoms, talking eager words and little gestures and quick laughs. . . . And Achilles, coming out, smiled at the two heads bending above the plant. Yaxis had been lonely—but now the little laughs seemed to stir softly in the close rooms and wake something happy there.

XXIII

ACHILLES HAS A PLAN

THE next day, life in the little shop went on as if there had been no break. With the early light, Yaxis was off, to the south, pushing his tip-cart before him and calling aloud—bananas and fruit and the joy of Alcibiades's return, in his clear, high voice. . . . In the shop, Achilles arranged the fruit—great piles of oranges, and grape fruit and figs—and swung the heavy bunches of bananas to their hooks outside, and opened crates and boxes and made ready for the day. By and by, when trade slackened a little, he would slip away and leave Alcibiades in charge of the shop. . . . His mind was busy as he worked. He had something to do that would take him away from the shop—every day for a while, it might be—but the shop would not suffer. Alcibiades was strong—not

well enough, perhaps, to go out with the new push-cart that had replaced the old one, and waited outside, but strong enough to make change and fill up the holes in the piles of oranges as they diminished under the swift rush of trade.

Achilles's eyes rested on him fondly. It had been lonely in the shop—but now the long days of waiting were repaid . . . . they had their clue. Even now the detectives might have followed it up . . . . The little lady would be found . . . . He hurried over the last things—his heart singing—and called the boy to him.

"I go away," he said, looking at him kindly. "You stay in shop—till I come."

"Yes, father." The boy's eyes were happy. It was good to be in the close, dark, home place with its fruity smell and the striped awning outside. "I do all right!" he said gaily.

The father nodded. "To-morrow you go with push-cart—little way—every

day little way—" he waited a moment while the boy's face took in the words—he spoke with slow significance—"Some day you see—those men—then you run—like devil!" he said quickly, "you tell me!"

The boy's teeth made a quick line of light and his face flashed. "I tell—quick!" he said, "I know those men!"

The father nodded. "Not to-day. You not strong enough to-day. To-morrow you go—you watch always—those men."

He left the shop and was lost in the crowd. He was going first to the city hall for news—then he would seek Philip Harris. The plan that he was shaping in his mind needed help.

But at the city hall there was no news. The chief of police seemed even a little irritated at the sight of the dark face and the slim, straight figure that stood before him. He eyed it a moment, almost hostilely; then he remembered Philip Harris's commands and told the

man what steps had been taken and the reports that had come in thus far through the day. The Greek listened without comment, his dark face smouldering a little over its quick fire. "You find nothing?" he said quietly.

"Not a damn thing!" answered the chief.

"I go try," said Achilles.

The man looked at him. Then he laughed out. The door opened. It was the detective in charge of the case. He glanced at Achilles and went over to the chief and said something. But the chief shook his head and they looked carelessly at Achilles, while the chief drummed on the desk. Achilles waited with slow, respectful gaze.

The detective came across to him. "No news," he said.

Achilles's face held its steady light. "I think we find her," he said.

The inspector did not laugh. He studied the man's face slowly, whistling a little between his teeth. "What's your plan?" he said.

Achilles shook his head. "When I see those men—I go follow."

The detective smiled—a little line of smile . . . that did not scorn him. "When you see them—yes!" he said softly.

The chief of police, listening with half an ear, laughed out. "Catch your hare, Alexander!" He said it with superior ease.

Achilles looked at him. "I catch hair?" he asked with polite interest.

The chief nodded. "You catch your hare before you cook it, you know."

Achilles ran a slim, thoughtful hand along his dark locks and shook them slowly. . . . The conversation had passed beyond him.

The detective smiled a little. "Never mind him, Alexander. Anything that you find—you bring to me—right off." He clinked a little money in his pocket and looked at him.

But Achilles's gaze had no returning gleam. "When I find her," he said, "I

tell you—I tell everybody." His face had lightened now.

The detective laughed. "All right, Alexander! You're game, all right!"

Achilles looked at him with puzzled eyes. "I go now," he said. He moved away with the smooth, unhurried rhythm that bore him swiftly along.

The eyes of the two men followed him. "You're welcome to him!" said the chief carelessly.

"I don't feel so sure," said the other—"He may do it yet—right under our noses. . . . I've done it myself—you know."

The chief looked at him curiously.

"*I* used to do it—time and again," said the man, thoughtfully. "*I* couldn't 'a' told you—*how*. I'd study on a case—and study—and give it up—and then, all of a sudden—pop!—and there it was—in my head. I couldn't have told how it got there, but it worked all right!" He lighted a cigar and threw the match from him, puffing slowly. "I'd do it now—if I could". . . . He was lost in

thought. . . . "There's something in his eyes—that Greek. . . I'd like to be inside that black skull of his a minute." He sauntered across the room and went out.

The eyes of the chief of police looked after him vaguely. He drew a column of figures toward him and began to add it—starting at the bottom and travelling slowly up. He was computing his revenues for the coming year.

XXIV

IT FLOATS A LITTLE

Achilles found Philip Harris at luncheon, and waited for him to come back, and laid his plan before him.

The millionaire listened, and nodded once or twice, and took up the receiver and gave an order. "He'll be at your place every day," he said to Achilles as he hung it up. "You tell him what you want—and let me know if there's anything else—money—?" He looked at him.

But Achilles shook his head. "I got money," he said quickly. "I get money—six-seven dollar—every day. I do good business!"

The millionaire smiled, a little bitterly. "I do good business, too; but it doesn't seem to count much. Well—let me know—" He held out his hand and Achilles took it and hesitated and looked

at the seamed red face that waited for him to go—then he went quietly out.

He would have liked to speak swift words of hope—they rode high in his heart—but something in the face put him off and he went out into the sunshine and walked fast. He looked far ahead as he went, smiling softly at his dream. And now and then a man passed him—and looked back and smiled too—a shrewd, tolerant, grown-up smile.

At ten o'clock the next morning Philip Harris's big touring car drew up in front of the striped awning; it gave a little plaintive honk—and stood still. Achilles came to the door with swift look. He turned back to the shop. "I go," he said to Alcibiades, and stepped across the pavement, and was off.

At two o'clock he returned to the shop, his face covered with big beads of perspiration, his hat gone and his eyes shining—and, without a word, he went about the shop with his wonted air of

swift-moving silence. But the next day he was off again, and the next; and Alcibiades grew accustomed to the long car slipping up and the straight, slim figure sliding into it and taking its place and disappearing down the street.

Where Achilles went on these excursions, or what he did, no one knew. Promptly at two each day he returned—always dishevelled and alert, but wearing a look of triumph that sat strangely on the quiet Greek reserve. It could not be said that Achilles strutted as he walked, but he had an air of confidence, as if he were seeing things—things far ahead—that were coming to him on the long road.

The boys could not make him out . . . . and their loyalty would not let them question him. But one day Yaxis, resting on the parapet that overlooked the lake, his cart drawn a little to one side, his hat off and his face taking in the breeze, saw a strange sight. . . . . It was a wide roadway, and free of traffic, and Yaxis had turned his head and

looked up and down its length. In the distance a car was coming—it was not speeding. It seemed coming on with little foolish movements—halting jerks and impatient honks. . . . Yaxis's eye rested on it bewildered—then it broke to a smile. Father was driving! . . . The chauffeur, beside him, with folded arms and set face had washed his hands of all responsibility—and the face of the Greek was shining. . . . . The great machine swerved and balked and ran a little way and stopped—Yaxis laughed softly. The chauffeur bent over with a word, and the thing shot off, Achilles with intent back, holding fast by both hands, his face set and shining ahead. Up and down the roadway, the thing zigzagged—back and forth—spitting a little and fizzing behind. . . . Like a great beast it snarled and snorted and stood out and waited the lash—and came to terms, gliding at last, by a touch along the smooth road—the face of Achilles transfigured in a dream. . . . The Acropolis floated behind him in the

haze. . . . The wings of the morning waited his coming and his hands gripped hard on the wheel of the world. . . . . Yaxis watched the car as it flashed and floated in the sun and was gone—down the roadway—around the distant corner—out of sight, with its faint triumphant "honk-honk-honk!" trailing behind.

With a deep smile on his face Yaxis wheeled his cart into the roadway and pushed briskly toward home, his mind filled with the vision of his father and the flying car.

The next day coming down the steps of a house and counting slow change, he looked up with a swift glance—something had passed him; for a moment he had only a glimpse—something familiar—a kind of home sense—then the figure of Achilles flashed out—the car shot round a corner. He sped to the corner and looked down the long road—no one—only two rows of poplars with their silvery, stirring leaves, and not a soul in sight—and respectable houses on

either side watching, as if nothing had happened, or ever would. Yaxis returned to his cart, wiping the fine moisture from his forehead. Every day now, his glance travelled about him as he pushed his cart along the quieter streets where his route lay. And often at the end of long vistas, or down a side street, he caught a glimpse of the shooting car and the dark, erect figure poised forward on its seat, looking far ahead.

At home, in the dusky interior, Achilles moved with sedate step, his hair combed, his slim hands busy with the smooth fruit. . . . Yaxis, in the doorway, looked at him with curious, wistful eyes.

Achilles glanced up and nodded, and the little smile on his dark face grew. He came forward. "You had good day?" he said.

"Yes, father. . . ." The boy hesitated a moment, and dug his toes—and flung out his hands in quick gesture . . . . "I see you!" he said—"You go in massheen!"

Achilles's glance flashed and grew to a deep, still smile. . . . "You see that machine?—You see me drive him? *I* make that machine go!" His chest expanded and he moved a few free steps and paused—

The boy's eyes rested on him proudly. Around them—out in the grimy street—the world hurried and scuffled and honked; and in the little back shop the father and the boy faced each other, a strange, new, proud joy around them—"I drive that machine," said Achilles softly.

XXV

AND STARTS OFF

Achilles came to the door of the shop and looked out. A car had drawn up to the sidewalk—a rough, racing machine with open sides and big wheels—and the driver, a big man in a white cap and rough linen suit, was beckoning to him with his hand. Achilles stepped across the walk, and stood by the machine with quiet, waiting face.

The man looked him over, a little as if he owned him—"I want some fruit," he said quickly, "—oranges—grapes—anything—?" His glance ran to the fruit on the stall—"Get me something quick—and don't be all day—" His hand was fumbling for change.

"I get you best orange," said Achilles. He snapped open a paper bag and turned to the heaped-up fruit. . . .

Then his eye paused—a boy was breaking through the crowd—hatless, breathless—and calling him with swift gesture.

Achilles sprang forward. "What is it, Alcie?" His eye was searching the crowd, and his hand dropped to the boy's shoulder.

"There they are!" gasped the boy, "*There!*"

Achilles's eye gleamed—down the street, a little way off, a car was wheeling out from the curb—gathering head.

Achilles's eyes flashed on it . . . . and swept the crowd—and came back . . . .

The man in the white cap by the curb was swearing softly. He leaped with two steps, from the panting car to the stall and began gathering up oranges. "Here—" he said. Then he wheeled—and saw the Greek fruit-dealer flashing off in a car—*his* car. "Here—you!" he shouted.

But Achilles gave no heed—and the boy, urging him on from behind, turned with swift smile—"He

take your car—" he said, "he need that car!"

But the white-capped man pounced upon him, and shook him by the shoulder—watching his car that was threading fast in the crowded traffic. . . . . He dropped the boy, and his hand reached up, signalling wildly for police—a city service car sprang from the ground, it seemed. The white-capped man leaped in and they were off—honking the crowd . . . . . heavy drays moved from before them with slow, eternal wheel—the white cap swore softly and leaned forward and urged. . . . . and the dark, Greek head bobbed far ahead—along in the crowd—the big, grey racer gathering speed beneath. . . . Achilles was not thinking of the pursuit, yelling behind him—he had no thoughts—only two eyes that held a car far in the distance, and two hands that gripped the wheel and drove hard, and prayed grimly. . . . If his eye lost that car. . . . ! It was turning now — far ahead . . . . and his eye marked the place and held

it—fixed. . . . . His car jolted and bumped . . . Men swore and made way before him, and noted the hatless head, and looked behind—and saw the police car—and yelled aloud. But no one saw him in time, and he was not stopped. He had reached the corner where the car disappeared from sight, and he leaned forward, with careful turn, peering around the corner. . . . ? They were there—yes. . . . He drove faster—and the great, ugly car lifted itself and flung forward and settled to long sliding gait . . . . . The car ahead turned again in the whirling traffic—and turned again . . . . But Achilles's eye did not lose its track . . . . . and they were out in the open at last—the plain stretching before them—no turn to left or right—and the machine Achilles drove had no equal in the country. . . . But Achilles did not know his machine. . . . Good or bad, it must serve him and keep his men in sight—but not too near—not to frighten them! . . . . . They had turned now and were glancing back and they

spoke quickly— Then they looked again —at the flying hair and hatless head— and saw suddenly, on behind it, the service car leap softly around the corner into the white road. . . . They looked again—and laughed. They turned and dropped the matter— "Some damn fool with a stolen car."

XXVI

AND RACES FOR THE CLUE

UNDER the great bowl of sky, in the midst of the plain, the three cars held their level way—three little racing dots in the big, clear place. . . . They kept an even course, swaying to the race on level wings that swept the ground and rose to the low swale and passed beyond. Only the long free line of dust marked their flight under the sun.

The men at the front, in the car ahead, did not look back again. . . . They had lost interest in the race pressing behind—most anxiously, they had lost interest in it. They wished, with a fervent wish, that the two cars driving behind them should pass them in a swirl of dust—and pass on out of sight—toward the far horizon line that stretched the west. They were only two market gardeners returning from business in

the city. If they drove a good car, it was to save time going and coming—not to race with escaping fugitives and excited police. . . . . They had no wish to race with the excited police—fervently they had no wish for it—and they slackened speed a little, drawing freer breath . . . . Let the fellow pass them—and his police with him—before they reached a little, white, peaceful house that stood ahead on the plain. . . . They did not look behind at justice pursuing its prey . . . . . they had lost all interest in justice and in the race. Presently, when justice should pass them, on full-spreading wing, they would look up with casual glance, and note its flight over the far line—out of sight in the distant west. . . . . But now they did not know of its existence.

And Achilles, pressing fast, had a quick, clear sense of mystery—something that brooded ahead—on the shining plain and the little, white house and the car before him slackening speed . . . *Why* should it slow down?—what

was up? . . . Cautiously he held his car, slowing its waving gleam to the pace ahead and darting a swift glance behind, over his shoulder; at the great service car that leaped and gained on him lap by lap. It would overtake him soon—and he *must* not pass the car ahead—not till he saw what they were up to. . . . Would they pass that little white house—on the plain—or would they turn in there—? The wind hummed in his ears—his hair flew—and his hand held tense to the wheel—slowing it cautiously, inch by inch—slackening a little—slackening again with quick-flung, flashing glance behind—and a watchful eye on the car ahead . . . . . and on the little white house drawing near on the plain. It was a race now between his quick mind and that car ahead and the little white house . . . . He must not overtake them till the little house was reached. . . The car behind must not touch him—not till the house came up. There was a wood ahead, in the distance—his mind flew and

circled the wood—and came back . . . . They had reached the little house asleep in the sun. They were passing it, neck and neck, and the car beside him swerved a little and slackened speed—and dived in at the white gate. Achilles shot past—the great racing car beneath him—the free road ahead. The machine under him gathered speed and opened out and laughed and leaped to the road and lay down in the thick dust, spreading itself ahead. . . . He could gain the wood. . . . He should escape—and the clue was fast. . . .

Behind him, the service car thundered by the little house asleep. But the police did not glance that way—nor did the big, white-capped man glance that way. *His* eyes were fixed on the racer ahead—dwindling to a speck in its cloud of dust. . . . He pushed up his visor and laughed aloud. . . . "Give it up!" he said genially, "give it up!—you can't catch *that* car!—I know my own car, I guess!" He laughed again. "We shall

find it somewhere along the road—when he is through with it!"

But the face beside him, turning in the clouding dust, had a keen look and the car kept its unbroken speed, and the plain flashed by, "He's in too big a hurry—" said the driver sternly. . . . "I want a look at that man! He knows too much!"

Too much! The heart of Achilles sang again—all the heart of him woke up and laughed to the miles. . . . He had found his clue—he had passed the little hundred-thousand-dollar house, and the police in their big, bungling dust had passed it, too. Nobody knew—but him. . . . and he should escape—over the long road. . . . with the big machine, under him, pounding away.

XXVII

THE LITTLE WHITE HOUSE

In an angle of the wood the dust-covered policeman and the white-capped man came upon the racer, turned a little from the road, and waiting their arrival. It had a stolid, helpless look—with its nose buried deep in underbrush and the hind wheels tilted a little in air. One might almost fancy it gave a little, subdued hiccough, as they approached.

The white-capped man bent above it and ran a quick hand along the side, and leaped to the vacant seat. The beast beneath gave a little snort and withdrew its nose and pranced playfully at the underbrush and backed away, feeling for firm ground behind. The man at the wheel pressed hard, leaning—with quick jerk—and wheels gripped ground and trundled in the road. It

stopped beside the service car and the two men gazed doubtfully at the wood. Dusty leaves trembled at them in the light air, and beckoned to them—little twigs laced across and shut them out . . . . . Anywhere in the dark coolness of the wood, the Greek lurked, hiding away. They could not trace him—and the wood reached far into the dusk. He was undoubtedly armed. Only a desperate man would have made a dash like that—for life. Better go back to town for reinforcements and send the word of his escape along the line. He would not get far—on foot! They gave another glance at the wood and loosed their cars to the road, gliding smoothly off. The wood behind them, under its cover of dust, gave no sign of watching eyes; and the sun, travelling toward the west, cast their long, clean shadows ahead as they went. In the low light, the little, white house in the distance had a rosy, moody look. As they drew nearer, little pink details flashed out. An old man behind the picket fence

looked up, and straightened himself, and gazed—under a shading hand. Then he came along the driveway and stood in the white gate, waiting their approach. He had a red, guileless face and white hair. The face held a look of childish interest as they drew up. "You got him?" he asked.

The service man shook his head, jerking his thumb at the racer that came behind—"Got the car," he said. "He got off—took to the woods."

"That so?" The old man came out to the road and looked with curious eyes at the big racing-machine coming up. "What'd he do?" he asked.

"He stole my machine," said the white-capped man quickly. He was holding the wheel with a careful touch.

The old man looked at him with shrewd, smiling eyes—chewing at some invisible cud. The service man nodded to him, "There'll be a reward out for him, Jimmie—keep a watch out. You may have a chance at it. He's hiding

somewhere over there." He motioned toward the distant wood.

The old man turned a slow eye toward the west. "I don't own no telescope," he said quaintly. He shifted the cud a little, and gazed at the plain around them—far as the eye could see, it stretched on every side. Only the little, white house stood comfortably in its midst—open to the eye of heaven. It was a rambling, one story and a half house, with no windows above the ground floor—except at the rear, where one window, under a small peak, faced the north. Beyond the house, in that direction, lay lines of market garden—and beyond the garden the wide plain . . . . . Two men, at work in the garden, hoed with long, easy strokes that lengthened in the slanting light. The service man looked at them with casual eye—"Got good help this year?" he asked.

The old man faced about, and his eye regarded them mildly. . . . "Putty good," he said, "they're my sister's

boys. . . . She died this last year—along in April—and they come on to help. Yes, they work putty good."

"They drove in ahead of us, didn't they?" asked the service man, with sudden thought.

The old man smiled drily. . . . "Didn't know's you see 'em. You was so occupied. . . . Yes—they'd been in to sell the early potatoes. I've got a putty good crop this year—early potatoes. They went in to make a price on 'em. We'll get seventy-five if we take 'em in to-morrow—and they asked what to do—and I told 'em they better dig." He chuckled slowly.

The service man smiled. "You keep 'em moving, don't you, Jimmie!" He glanced at the house. "Any trade—? Got a license this year?"

The old man shook his head—"Bone dry," he said, chewing slowly. "Them cars knocked *me* out!" He came and stood by the racer, running his hand along it with childish touch.

The service man watched him with detached smile. The old man's silly shrewdness amused him. He suspected him of a cask or two in the cellar. In the days of bicycles the old man had driven a lively trade; but with the long-reaching cars, his business dribbled away, and he had slipped back from whiskey to potatoes. He was a little disgruntled at events, and would talk socialism by the hour to anyone who would listen. But he was a harmless old soul. The service man glanced at the sun. It had dipped suddenly, and the plain grew dusky black. The distant figures hoeing against the plain were lost to sight. "Hallo!" said the service man quickly, "we must get on—" He looked again, shrewdly, toward the old man in the dusk—"You couldn't find a drop of anything, handy—to give away—Jimmie?" he suggested.

The old man tottered a slow smile at him and moved toward the house. He

came back with a long-necked bottle grasped tight, and a couple of glasses that he filled in the dimness.

The service man held up his glass with quick gesture—"Here's to you, Jimmie!" he said, throwing back his head. "May you live long, and prosper!" He gulped it down.

The old man's toothless smile received the empty glasses; and when the two machines had trundled away in the dimness, it stood looking after them—the deep smile of guileless, crafty old age—that suffers and waits—and clutches its morsel at last and fastens on it—without joy, and without shame.

XXVIII

INSIDE THE LITTLE HOUSE

The two figures amid the rows of the market garden paused, in the enveloping dusk, and leaned on their hoes, and listened—a low, peevish whistle, like the call of a night-jar, on the plain, came to them. Presently the call repeated itself—three wavering notes—and they shouldered their hoes and moved toward the little house.

The old man emerged from the gloom, coming toward them. . . . "What was it?" asked one of the figures quickly.

The old man chuckled. "Stole a racer—that's about all *they* knew—*you* got off easy!" He was peering toward them.

The larger of the two figures straightened itself. "I am sick of it—I tell you!—my back's broke!" He moved himself in the dusk, stretching out his

great arms and looking about him vaguely.

The old man eyed him shrewdly. "You're earning a good pile," he said.

"Yes—one-seventy-five a day!" The man laughed a little.

The other man had not spoken. He slipped forward through the dusk—"Supper ready?" he asked.

They followed him into the house, stopping in an entry to wash their hands and remove their heavy shoes. Through the door opening to a room beyond, a woman could be seen, moving briskly, and the smell of cooking floated out. They sniffed at it hungrily.

The woman came to the door—"Hurry up, boys—everything's done to death!"

They came in hastily, with half-dried hands, and she looked at them—a laugh in her round, keen face. "You *have* had a day!" she said. She was tall and angular, and her face had a sudden roundness—a kind of motherly, Dutch

doll, set on its high, lean frame. Her body moved in soft jerks.

She heaped up the plates with quick hands, and watched the men while they ate. For a time no one spoke. The old man went to the cellar and brought up a great mug of beer, and they filled their pipes and sat smoking and sipping the beer stolidly. The windows were open to the air and the shades were up. Any one passing on the long road, over the plain, might look in on them. The woman toasted a piece of bread and moistened it with a little milk and put it, with a glass of milk, on a small tray. The men's eyes followed her, indifferent. They watched her lift the tray and carry it to a door at the back of the room, and disappear.

They smoked on in silence.

The old man reached out for his glass. He lifted it. "Two weeks—and three more days," he said. He sipped the beer slowly.

The larger of the two men nodded.

He had dark, regular features and reddish hair. He looked heavy and tired. He opened his lips vaguely.

"Don't talk here!" said the younger man sharply—and he gave a quick glance at the room—as a weasel returns to cover, in a narrow place.

The big man smiled. "I wa'n't going to say anything."

"Better not!" said the other. He cleared his pipe with his little finger. "*I* don't even think," he added softly.

The woman had come back with the tray and the men looked up, smoking.

She set the tray down by the sink and came over to them, standing with both hands on her high hips. She regarded them gravely and glanced at the tray. The milk and toast were untouched.

The old man removed his pipe and looked at her plaintively—"Can't ye *make* her, Lena?" he said. His high voice had a shrill note.

She shook her head. "*I* can't do anything—not anything more."

She moved away and began to gather

up the dishes from the table, clearing it with swift jerks. She paused a moment and leaned over—the platter in her hand half-lifted from its place—"She needs the air," she said, "and to run about—she's sick—shut up like that!" She lifted the platter and carried it to the sink, a troubled look in her eyes—"I won't be responsible for her—not much longer," she said slowly, as she set it down, "—not if she doesn't get down in the air."

The men looked at each other in silence. The old man got up—"Time to go to bed—" he said slowly.

They filed out of the room. The woman's eyes followed them. Presently the door opened and the younger man returned, with soft, quick steps. He looked at her—"I want to talk," he said.

"In a minute," she replied. She nodded toward the cellar—"The lantern's down there—you go along."

He opened the door and stepped cautiously into blackness, and she heard a

quick, scratching match on the plaster behind the closed door, and his feet descending the stairs.

She drew forward the kettle on the stove and replenished the fire, and blew out the hand lamp on the table. Then she groped her way to the cellar door, opening it with noiseless touch. . . .

The young man waited below, impatient. On a huge barrel near by, the lantern cast a yellow circle on the blackness.

The woman approached it, her high-stepping figure flung in shadowy movement along the wall behind her.

"You can't back out *now!*" He spoke quickly. "You're weakening! And you've got to brace up—do you hear!"

The woman's round face smiled—over the light on the barrel—"*I'm* all right," she said. She hesitated a minute. . . . "It's the child that's not all right," she added slowly. "And to-night I got scared—yes—" She waited a breath. . . .

"What's the matter?" he said roughly.

She waited again. "She wasn't like flesh and blood to-night," she said slowly. "I felt as if a breath would blow her out—" She drew her hand quickly across her eyes. "I've got fond of the little thing, John—I can't seem to have her hurt!"

"Who's hurting her?" said the man sharply. "*You* take care of her—and she's all right."

"I can't, John. She needs the outdoors. She's like a little bird up there—shut up!"

"Then let her out—" said the man savagely. "Let her out—up there!" His lifted hand pointed to the plain about them—in open scorn. He leaned forward and spoke more persuasively, close to her ear—"We can't back out now—" he said, "*the child knows too much!*" He gave the barrel beside them a significant tap—"We couldn't use *this* plant again—six years—digging it—and waiting and starving!"

He struck the barrel sharply. "I tell you we've *got* to put it through! You keep her out of sight!"

"Her own mother wouldn't know her—" said the woman slowly.

He met the look—and waited.

"I tell you, I've done everything," she said with quick passion. "I've fed her and amused her and told her stories—I don't *dare* keep her any longer!" She touched the barrel beside them—"I tell you, you might as well put her under that. . . . You'll put her under for good—if you don't look out!" she said significantly.

"All right," said the man sullenly, "what do you want?"

She was smiling again—the round, keen smile, on its high frame. "Let her breathe a bit—like a child—and run out in the sun. The sun will cure her!" she added quickly.

"All right—if you take the risk—a hundred-thousand-dollars—and your own daughter thrown to the devil—if we lose—! . . . You know *that!*"

"I know, John—I want the money—more than you want it!" She spoke with quick, fierce loyalty. "I'd give my life for Mollie—or to keep her straight—but I can't kill a child to keep her straight—not *this* child—to keep her straight!" Her queer, round face worked, against the yellow light.

He looked at it, half contemptuously, and turned to the barrel.

"See if everything's all right," he said. "If we're going to take risks—we've got to be ready."

The woman lifted the lantern, and he pushed against the barrel. It yielded to his weight—the upper part turning slowly on a pivot. Something inside swashed against the sides as it turned. The man bent over the hole and peered in. He stepped down cautiously, feeling with his foot and disappearing, inch by inch, into the opening. The woman held the light above him, looking down with quick, tense eyes . . . . . a hand reached up to her, out of the hole, beckoning for the lantern and she knelt

down, guiding it toward the waving fingers. . . . A sound of something creaking—a hinge half turned—caught her breath—and she leaned forward, blowing at the lantern. She got quickly to her feet and groped for the swinging barrel, turning it swiftly over the hole—the liquid chugged softly against its side—and stopped. . . . . Her breath listened up into the darkness. . . . The door above creaked again softly—and a shuffling foot groped at the stair . . . "You down there—Lena?" called an old voice.

She laughed out softly, moving toward the stair—"Go to bed, father."

"What you doing down there?" asked the old voice in the darkness.

"Testing the barrel," said the woman. "John's gone down." She came to the foot of the stair, "You go to bed, father—"

"*You* better come to bed—all of ye," grumbled the old man.

"We're coming—in a minute." She

heard his hand fumble at the door—and it creaked again—softly—and closed.

She groped her way back to the barrel, waiting beside it in the darkness.

XXIX

UPSTAIRS

When the man's head reappeared, he came up briskly.

"All right?" she asked.

"All right," he responded.

"Did you test the other end?"

"Right through—" said the man. "Safe as a church! The water barrel in the garden stuck a little—but I eased it up—" He looked back into the hole, as he stepped out, "Too bad we had to take *her* down," he said regretfully—

"The police *might* 'a' stopped," said the woman. "You couldn't tell."

They swung the barrel in place, and blew out the lantern, and the man ascended the stair. After a few minutes the woman came up. The kitchen was empty. The fire burning briskly cast a line of light beneath the hearth, and on the top of the stove the kettle hummed

quietly. She lighted a lamp and lifted the kettle, filling her dishpan with soft steam. . . . . Any one peering in at the open window would have seen only a tall woman, with high shoulders, bending above her cloud of steam and washing dishes, with a quiet, round face absorbed in thought.

When she had finished at the sink and tidied the room, she took the lamp and went into the small hall at the rear, and mounted the steep stairs. At the top she paused and fitted a key and entered a low room. She put down the lamp and crossed to the door on the other side—and listened. The sound of low breathing came lightly to her, and her face relaxed. She came back to the bureau, looking down thoughtfully at the coarse towel that covered it, and the brush and comb and tray of matches. There was nothing else on the bureau. But on a little bracket at the side the picture of a young girl, with loose, full lips and bright eyes, looked out from a great halo of pompadour—with the half-

wistful look of youth. The mother's eyes returned to the picture and her keen face softened. . . . She must save Mollie—and the child in the next room—she must save them both. . . . She listened to the child again, breathing beyond the open door. She looked again at the picture, with hungry eyes. . . . Her own child—her Mollie—had never had a chance—she had loved gay things—and there was no money—always hard work and wet feet and rough, pushing cars. . . . No wonder she had gone wrong! But she would come back now . . . . There would be money enough—and they would go away—together . . . . Twenty-five thousand dollars. . . She looked long at the pitiful, weak, pictured face and blew out the light and crept into bed. . . . And in the next room the child's even breathing came and went. . . . and, at intervals, across it in the darkness, another sound—the woman's quick, indrawn breath that could not rest.

XXX

ASLEEP

In the morning the woman was up with the first light. And as the men came grumbling in to breakfast, the round face wore its placid smile. They joked her and ate hastily and departed for the open field. . . . It was part of a steady policy—to be always in the open—busy, hard-working men who could not afford to lose an hour. The excursion had been a quick, reckless revolt—against weeks of weeding and planting and digging. . . . But they had had their lesson. They were not likely to stir from their strip of market garden on the plain—not till the time was up. . . .

As the woman went about her work, she listened, and stopped and went to the door—for some sound from upstairs. Presently she went up . . . .

and opened the door . . . and looked in.

The child lay with one hand thrown above her head—a drawn look in the softly arched brow and half-parted lips . . . . . The woman bent over her, listening—and placed her hand on the small wrist and counted—waiting. The eyes flashed open—and looked at her . . . . "I thought you were Nono," said the child. A wistful look filled her face and her lip quivered a little—out of it—and steadied itself. . . . "You are Mrs. Seabury," she said quietly.

"Yes," said the woman cheerfully—"Time to get up, dearie." She turned away and busied herself with the clothes hanging from their hooks.

The child's eyes followed her—dully . . . . "I don't think I care to get up," she said at last.

The woman brought the clothes and placed them by the bed, and smiled down at her. "There's something nice to-day," she said casually. "We're going out-doors to-day—"

"*Can* I?" said the child. She flashed a smile and sat up—"Can *I* go out-of-doors?" It was a little cry of waiting—and the woman's hand dashed across her eyes—at the keenness of it. Then she smiled—the round, assuring smile, and held up the clothes. . . . "You hurry up and dress and eat your breakfast," she said, "—a good, big breakfast—and we are going—out in the sun—you and me." She nodded cheerfully and went out.

The child put one foot over the edge of the bed and looked down at it—a little wistfully—and placed the other beside it. . . . They were very dark, little feet—a queer, brown colour—and the legs above them, were the same curious brown—and the small straight back—as she stepped from the bed and slipped off her nightgown and bent above the clothes on the chair. . . . The colour ran up to her throat—around it, and over the whole sunny face and hands and arms—a strange, eclipsing, brown disguise. . . . . There had been a quick,

sharp plan to take her abroad and they prepared her hastily against risks on board the steamer. The plan had been abandoned as too dangerous. But the colour clung to the soft skin; and the hair, cropped close to the neck, had a stubby, uncouth look. . . . . No one seeking Betty Harris, would have looked twice at the queer, little, brownie-like creature, dressing itself with careful haste. It lifted a plaid dress from the chair—large squares of red and green plaid—and looked at it with raised brows and dropped it over the cropped head. The skirt came to the top of the rough shoes on the small feet. Betty Harris looked down at the skirt—and smoothed it a little . . . . and dropped on her knees beside the bed—the red and green plaids sweeping around her—and said the little prayer that Miss Stone had taught her to say at home.

XXXI

A BUTTERFLY FLIGHT

She came down the stairs with slow feet, pausing a little on each stair, as if to taste the pleasure that was coming to her. . . . *She was going out-of-doors—under the sky!*

She pushed open the door at the foot and looked into the small hall—she had been here before. They had hurried her through—into the kitchen, and down to the cellar. They had stayed there a long time—hours and hours—and Mrs. Seabury had held her on her lap and told her stories. . . .

She stepped down the last step into the hall. The outside door at the end was open and through it she could see the men at work in the garden—and the warm, shimmering air. She looked, with eager lip, and took a step forward—and remembered—and turned toward the

kitchen. . . . Mrs. Seabury had said she must have breakfast first—a good, big breakfast—and then. . . . . She opened the door and looked in. The woman was standing by the stove. She looked up with a swift glance and nodded to her—"That's right, dearie. Your breakfast is all ready—you come in and eat it." She drew up a chair to the table and brought a glass of milk and tucked the napkin under her brown chin, watching her with keen, motherly eyes, while she ate.

"That's a good girl!" she said. She took the empty plate and carried it to the sink. "Now you wait till I've washed these—and then—!" She nodded toward the open window.

The child slipped down and came over to her and stood beside her while she worked, her eyes full of a little, wistful hope. "I've most forgot about out-of-doors," she said.

"Oh, you remember it all right. It's just the same it always was," said the woman practically. "Now I'll stir up

some meal and we'll go feed the chicks. . . . I've got ten of 'em—little ones." She mixed the yellow meal and stirred it briskly, and took down her sun-bonnet —and looked at the child dubiously— "You haven't any hat," she said.

The child's hand lifted to the rough, cropped hair—"I did have a hat—with red cherries on it," she suggested.

The woman turned away brusquely. "That's gone—with your other things— I'll have to tie a handkerchief on you."

She brought a big, coloured kerchief —red with blue spots on it—and bound it over the rough hair—and stood back and looked at it, and reached out her hand—"It won't do," she said thoughtfully. The small face, outlined in the smooth folds, had looked suddenly and strangely refined. The woman took off the handkerchief and roughened the hair with careful hand.

The child waited patiently. "I don't need a hat, do I?" she said politely.

The woman looked at her again and took up the dish of meal. "You're all

right," she said, "we shan't stay long."

"I should *like* to stay a long, *long* time!" said Betty.

The woman smiled. "You're going out every day, you know."

"Yes." The child skipped a little in the clumsy shoes, and they passed into the sunshine.

The woman looked about her with practical eyes. . . . In the long rows of the garden the men were at work. But up and down the dusty road—across the plain—no one was in sight, and she stepped briskly toward an open shed, rapping her spoon a little against the side of the basin she carried, and clucking gently.

The child beside her moved slowly—looking up at the sky, as if half afraid. She seemed to move with alien feet under the sky. . . . Then a handful of yellow, downy balls darted from the shed, skittering toward them, and she fell to her knees, reaching out her hands to them and crooning softly. "The dear things!" she said swiftly.

The woman smiled, and moved toward the shed, tapping on the side of her pan—and the yellow brood wheeled with the sound, on twinkling legs and swift, stubby wings.

The child's eyes devoured them. "They belong to you, don't they!" she cried softly. "They're your *own*—your very own chickens!" Her laugh crept over them and her eyes glowed. "See the little one, Mrs. Seabury! Just *see* him run!" She had dropped to her knees again—breathless—beside the board where they pushed and perked and gobbled the little, wet lumps of the meal, and darted their shiny black bills at the board.

The woman handed her the pan. "You can feed them if you want to," she said.

The child took the basin, with shining eyes, and the woman moved away. She examined the slatted box—where the mother hen ran to and fro, with clucking wings—and gave her some fresh water and looked in the row of nests along

the side of the shed, and took out a handful of eggs, carrying them in wide-spread, careful fingers.

The child, squatting by the board, was looking about her with happy eyes. She'd almost forgotten the prisoned room up stairs and the long lonesome days. The woman came over to her, smiling. "I've found seven," she said. The child's eyes rested on them. Then they flitted to the sunshine outside. . . . A yellow butterfly was fluttering in the light—across the opening of the shed. It lighted on a beam and opened slow wings, and the child's eyes laughed softly . . . . she moved tiptoe . . . "I saw a *beautiful* butterfly once!" she said. But the woman did not hear. . . She had passed out of the shed—around the corner—and was looking after the chickens outside—her voice clucking to them lightly. . . . The child moved toward the butterfly, absorbed in shining thought. . . . . "It was a *beautiful* butterfly—" she said softly, "in a Greek shop." The wings of the butterfly rose

and circled vaguely and passed behind her, and she wheeled about, peering up into the dark shed. She saw the yellow wings—up there—poise themselves, and wait a minute—and sail toward the light outside. . . . . But she did not turn to follow its flight— Across the brown boards of the shed—behind a pile of lumber, against the wall up there—a head had lifted itself and was looking at her. She caught her breath—"I saw a butterfly once!" she repeated dully. It was half a sob— The head laid a long, dark finger on its lip and sank from sight. . . . The child wheeled toward the open light—the woman was coming in, her hands filled with eggs. "I must carry these in," she said briskly. She looked at the child. "You can stay and play a little while—if you want to. But you must not go away, you know."

"I will not go away," said the child, breathless.

So the woman turned and left her—and the child's eyes followed her.

XXXII

AND A VOICE

"Can you hear me, little Miss Harris?" The voice came from the dusky shed, high up against the wall.

But the child did not turn her head. "Yes—Mr. Achilles—I can hear you very well," she said softly.

"Don't look this way," said the voice. "Get down and look at the chickens—and listen to what I tell you."

The child dropped obediently to her knees, her head a little bent, her face toward the open light outside.

The woman, going about her work in the kitchen, looked out and saw her and nodded to her kindly—

The child's lips made a little smile in return. They were very pale.

"I come to take you home," said the voice. It was full of tenderness and Betty Harris bent her head, a great

wave of homesickness sweeping across her—"I can't go, Mr. Achilles." It was like a sob—"I can't go. . . . They will kill you . . . I heard them. . . . They will kill *anybody*—that comes—!" She spoke in swift little whispers—and waited. "Can you hear me say it?" she asked. . . . "Can you hear me say it, Mr. Achilles?"

"I hear it—yes." The voice of Achilles laughed a little. "They will not kill—little lady, and you go home—with me—to-night." The voice dropped down from its high place and comforted her.

She reached out little hands to the chickens and laughed tremulously. "I am afraid," she said softly, "I am afraid!"

But the low voice, up in the dusk, steadied her and gave her swift commands—and repeated them—till she crept from the dim shed into the light and stood up—blinking a little—and looked about her—and laughed happily.

And the woman came to the door and

smiled at her. "You must come in," she called.

"Yes—Mrs. Seabury—" The child darted back into the shed and gathered up the spoon and basin from the board and looked about her swiftly. In the slatted box, the mother hen clucked drowsily, and wise cheeps from beneath her wings answered bravely. The child glanced at the box, and up at the dusky boards of the shed, peering far in the dimness. But there was no one—not even a voice—just the high, tumbled pile of boards—and the few nests along the wall and the mother hen clucking cosily behind her slats—and the wise little cheeps.

XXXIII

"WAKE UP, MRS. SEABURY!"

THE child lay with her hands clasped, breathing lightly. The sound of voices came drowsily from the kitchen . . . . she must not go to sleep! She sat up and leaned toward the little window that looked out to the north. Through the blackness the stars twinkled mistily, and she put her foot carefully over the edge of the bed and slipped down. The window was open—as far as the small sash allowed—and a warm, faint breeze came across the plain to her. She leaned against the sill, looking out. It was not far to the ground. . . . . But she could see only vague blackness down there, and she looked again up to the twinkling stars. . . . They were little points of light up there, and she looked up trustfully while the warm wind blew against her. . . . Her heart was beating

very hard—and fast—but she was not afraid. . . Mr. Achilles had said—not to be afraid—and he was waiting—down there in the blackness to take her home . . . . She crept back to bed and lay down—very still. . . . In the room below there was a scraping of chairs and louder words—and footsteps. . . . Someone had opened the door under her window and the smell of tobacco came up. . . . Her little nose disdained it—and listened, alert. Footsteps went out into the night and moved a little away on the gravel and came back, and the door closed. . . . She could hear the bolt click to its place and the footsteps shuffle along the hall. . . . . The voices below had ceased and the house was still—she was very sleepy now. But he had said—Mr. Achilles had said. . . . She winked briskly and gave herself a little pinch under the clothes—and sat up. It was a sharp little pinch—through many thicknesses of clothes. Under the coarse nightgown buttoned carefully to the throat, she was still

wearing the red and green plaids and all her day clothes. Only the clumsy shoes, slipped off, stood by the bed, waiting for her. Her hand reached down to them cautiously, and felt them—and she lay down and closed her eyes. There was a step on the stairs—coming slowly. Betty Harris grew very still. . . . If Mrs. Seabury came in and stood and looked at her . . . she must cry out—and throw her arms around her neck—and tell her *everything!* She could not hurt Mrs. Seabury. . . . Mr. Achilles had said they would not hurt her. She had asked him that—three times, herself—and Mr. Achilles had said it—no one should hurt Mrs. Seabury—if Betty went away. . . . She held her breath. . . . The footsteps had come across the room—to her door—they waited there. . . then they moved on—and she drew a free breath. Her heart thumped to the vague movements that came and went in the next room—they pottered about a little, and finally ceased and a light, indrawn breath blew

out the lamp—a hand was groping for the handle of her door—and opening it softly—and the bare feet moved away . . . The bed-springs in the next room creaked a little and everything was still. Betty Harris had a quick sense of pain . . . . Mrs. Seabury was kind to her! She had been so kind that first day, when they brought her in out of the hot sun, and she had stumbled on the stairs and sobbed out—Mrs. Seabury had picked her up and carried her up the stairs and comforted her. . . . and told her what it meant—these strange harsh men seizing her in the open sunshine, as they swept past—covering her mouth with hard hands and hurrying her out of the city to this stifling place. . . . She loved Mrs. Seabury. . . . Perhaps they would put her in prison . . . and *never* let her out—and Mollie would not get well. The child gave a little, quick sob, in her thought, and lay very still . . . Mollie had been good once, and wicked men had hurt her . . . and now her mother could not help her. . . .

But Mr. Achilles said—yes—he said it—no one should hurt her. . . . And with the thought of the Greek she lay in the darkness, listening to the sounds of the night. . . . There was a long, light call somewhere across the plain, a train of heavy Pullmans pushing through the night—the sound came to the child like a whiff of breath, and passed away . . . and the crickets chirped—high and shrill. . . . In the next room, the breathing grew loud, and louder, in long, even beats. . . . Mrs. Seabury was asleep! Betty Harris sat up in bed, her little hands clinched fast at her side. Then she lay down again—and waited . . . and the breathing in the next room grew loud, and regular, and full. . . . Mrs. Seabury was very tired! And Betty Harris listened, and slipped down from the bed, and groped for her shoes—and lifted them like a breath—and stepped high across the floor, in the dim room . . . . . It was a slow flight . . . . tuned to the long-drawn, falling breath of the sleeper—that did not break by a note—

not even when the brown hand released the latch and a little, sharp click fell on the air. . . "Wake up, Mrs. Seabury! Wake up—for Mollie's sake—wake up!" the latch said. But the sleeper did not stir—only the long, regular, dream-filled, droning sleep. . . . And the child crept down the stair—across the kitchen and reached the outer door. . . . She was not afraid now—one more door! The men would not hear her—they were asleep—Mrs. Seabury was asleep—and her fingers turned the key softly and groped to the bolt above—and pushed at it—hard—and fell back—and groped for it again—and tugged . . . little beads of sweat were coming on the brown forehead. She drew the back of her hand swiftly across them and reached again to the bolt. . . . It was too high—she could reach it—but not to push. . . . She felt for a chair, in the darkness—and lifted it, without a sound, and carried it to the door and climbed up. . . . There was a great lump in her throat now. . . . Mr. Achil-

les did not know the bolt would stick like this—she gave a fierce, soft tug, like a sob—and it slid back. The knob turned and the door opened and she was in the night . . . . . For a moment her eyes groped with the blackness. . . Then a long, quiet hand reached out to her—and closed upon her—and she gave a little sob, and was drawn swiftly into the night.

XXXIV

THE FLIGHT OF STARS

"Is that you, Mr. Achilles?" she asked —into the dark.

And the voice of Achilles laughed down to her. "I'm here—yes. It's me. We must hurry now—fast. Come!"

He gripped the small hand in his and they sped out of the driveway, toward the long road. Up above them the little stars blinked down, and the warm wind touched their faces as they went. The soft darkness shut them in. There was only the child, clinging to Achilles's great hand and hurrying through the night. Far in the distance, a dull, sullen glow lit the sky—the city's glow—and Betty's home, out there beneath it, in the dark. But the child did not know. She would not have known which way the city lay—but for Achil-

les's guiding hand. She clung fast to that—and they sped on.

By and by he ran a little, reaching down to her—and his spirit touched hers and she ran without fatigue beside him, with little breathless laughs—"I—like —to run!" she said.

"Yes—come—" He hurried her faster over the road—he would not spare her now. He held her life in his hand—and the little children—he saw them, asleep in their dreams, over there in the glow. . . . "Come!" he said. And they ran fast.

It was the first half hour he feared. If there was no pursuit, over the dark road behind them, then he would spare her—but not now. "Come!" he urged, and they flew faster.

And behind them the little house lay asleep—under its stars—no sign of life when his swift-flashing glance sought it out—and the heart of Achilles stretched to the miles and laughed with them and leaped out upon them, far ahead. . . . He should bring her home safe.

Then, upon the night, came a sound—faint-stirring wings — a long-drawn buzz and rush of air—deep notes that gripped the ground, far off—and the pulse of pounding wheels—behind them, along the dark road. . . . And Achilles seized the child by the shoulder, bearing her forward toward the short grass—his quick-running hand thrusting her down— "Lie still!" he whispered. The lights of the car had gleamed out, swaying a little in the distance, as he threw his coat across her and pressed it flat. "Lie still!" he whispered again, and was back in the road, his hand feeling for the great banana knife that rested in his shirt—his eye searching the road behind. There was time—yes—and he turned about and swung into the long, stretching pace that covers the miles—without hurry, without rest. The roar behind him grew, and flashed to light—and swept by—and his eye caught the face of the chauffeur, as it flew, leaning intently on the night; and in the lighted car behind him,

flashed a face—a man's face, outlined against the glass, a high, white face fixed upon a printed page—some magnate, travelling at his ease, sleepless. . . . thundering past in the night—unconscious of the Greek, plodding in the roadside dust.

Achilles knew that he had only to lift his hand—to cry out to them, as they sped, and they would turn with leaping wheel. There was not a man, hurrying about his own affairs, who would not gladly stop to gather up the child that was lost. . . . Word had come to Philip Harris—east and west—endless offers of help. . . . But the great car thundered by and Achilles's glance followed it, sweeping with it—on toward the city and the dull glow of sky. He was breathing hard as he went, and he plunged on a step—two steps—ten—before he held his pace; then he drew a deep, free breath, and faced about. The knife dropped back in his breast, and his hand sought the revolver in his hip pocket, crowding it down a lit-

tle. . . . He had been sure he could face them—two of them—three—as many as might be. . . . But the car had swept on, bearing its strangers to the city . . . and the little house on the plain was still asleep. He had a kind of happy superstition that he was to save the child single-handed. . . . He had not trusted the police . . . with their great, foolish fingers. They could not save his little girl. She had needed Achilles—and he had held the thread of silken cobweb—and traced it bit by bit to the place where they had hidden her. He should save her!

He glanced at the stars—an hour gone—and the long road to tramp. He ran swiftly to the child in the grass and lifted the coat and she leaped up, laughing—as if it were a game; and they swung out into the road again, walking with swift, even steps. "Are you tired?" asked Achilles. But she shook her head.

His hand in his pocket, in the darkness, had felt something and he pressed

it toward her— "Eat that," he said, "you will be hungry."

She took it daintily, and felt of it, and turned it over—"What is it?" she asked. Then she set her small teeth in it—and laughed out. "It's chocolate," she exclaimed happily. She held it up, "Will you have a bite, Mr. Achilles?"

But Achilles had drawn out another bit of tin-foil and opened it. "I have yet more," he said, "—two-three-six piece. I put here in my pocket, every day—I carry chocolate—till I find you. Every day I say, 'she be hungry, maybe—then she like chocolate'—"

She nibbled it in happy little nibbles, as they walked. "I didn't eat any supper," she said. "I was too happy—and too afraid, I guess. That was a long time ago," she added, after a minute.

"A long time ago," said Achilles cheerfully. He had taken her hand again, and they trudged on under the stars.

"Nobody must hurt Mrs. Seabury!" said the child suddenly.

"I tell you that," said Achilles—he had half stopped on the road. "Nobody hurt that good lady—she, your friend."

"Yes, she is my friend. She was good to me. . . . *She* had a little girl once—like me—and some bad men hurt her. . . . I don't think they stole her—" She pondered it a minute—"I don't seem to understand—" she gave a little swift sigh. "But Mrs. Seabury is going to take her a long, long way off—and keep her always."

Achilles nodded. "We help her do that," he said. "They don't hurt that good lady."

His eyes were on the stars, and he lifted his face a little, breathing in the freshness. A swift star shot across the sky, falling to earth, and he pointed with eager finger. The child looked up and caught the falling flash, and they ran a little, as if to follow the leaping of their hearts. Then they went more slowly,

and Achilles's long finger traced the heavens for her—the Greek gods up there in their swinging orbits . . . the warm, August night of the world. Betty Harris had never known the stars like this. . . . Safe from her window, she had seen them twinkle out. . . . But here they swept about her—and the plain reached wide—and close, in the darkness, a hand held her safe and the long finger of Achilles touched the stars and drew them down for her . . .Orion there, marching with his mighty belt—and Mars red-gleaming. The long, white plume of the milky way, trailing soft glory on the sky—and the great bear to the north. The names filled her ears with a mighty din, Calliope, Venus, Uranus, Mercury, Mars—and the shining hosts of heaven passed by. Far beyond them, mysterious other worlds gleamed and glimmered — without name. . . . And the heart of the child reached to them—and travelled through the vast arches of space, with her dusty little feet on the wide plain, and a

hand holding hers, safe and warm down there in the darkness. . . . Her eyes dropped from the stars and she trudged on.

When Achilles spoke again, he was telling her of Alcibiades and Yaxis and of the long days of waiting and the happiness their coming would bring—and of her father and mother, asleep at Idlewood—and the great house on the lake, ready always, night and day, for her coming—

"Do they know—" she asked quickly, "that we are coming?"

"Nobody knows," said Achilles, "except you and me."

She laughed out, under the stars, and stood still. "We shall surprise them!" she said.

"Yes—come!" They pressed on. Far ahead, foolish little stars had glimmered out—close to the ground—the fingers of the city, stretching toward the plain.

Her glance ran to them. "We're getting somewhere—?" she said swiftly.

"We're getting home!" Her hand squeezed his, swinging it a little.

"Not yet—" said Achilles, "not yet—but we shall take the car there. You need not walk any more."

She was very quiet and he leaned toward her anxiously. "You are not tired," he asked.

"No—Mr. Achilles—I don't think—I'm tired—" She held the words slowly. "I just thought we'd go on forever, walking like this—" She looked up and swept her small hand toward the stars. "I thought it was a dream—" she said softly—"Like the other dreams!" He felt a little, quick throb run through her, and he bent again and his fingers touched her cheek.

"I am not crying, Mr. Achilles," she said firmly, "I only just—" There was a little, choking sound and her face had buried itself in his sleeve.

And Achilles bent to her with tender gesture. Then he lifted his head and listened. . . . There was another sound, on the plain, mingling with the

sobs that swept across the child's frame.

He touched her quietly. "Someone is coming," he said.

She lifted her face, holding her breath with quick lip. . . . .

The sound creaked to them, and muffled itself, and spread across the plain, and came again in irregular rhythm that grew to the slow beat of hoofs coming upon the road.

Achilles listened back to the sound and waited a minute. Then he covered the child, as before, with his coat and turned back, walking along the road to meet the sound. It creaked toward him and loomed through the light of the stars—a great market wagon loaded with produce—the driver leaning forward on the seat with loose rein, half asleep. Suddenly he lifted his head and tightened rein, peering forward through the dark at the figure down there in the road. Achilles held his way.

"Hello!" said the man sharply.

Achilles paused and looked up—one

hand resting lightly on his hip, turned a little back—the other thrust in his breast.

The man's eyes scanned him through the dimness. "Where you bound for?" he asked curtly.

"I walk," said Achilles.

"Want a job?" asked the man.

"You got job for me?" asked Achilles. His voice had all the guileless caution of the foreigner astray in a free land. The man moved along on the seat. "Jump up," he said.

Achilles looked back and forth along the road. "I think I go long," he said slowly.

The man gave an impatient sound in his throat and clicked to the horses. The heavy wagon creaked into motion, and caught its rhythm and rumbled on.

Achilles's ears followed it with deep-bent caution. The creaking mass of sound had passed the flat-spread coat without stop, and gathered itself away into a slow rumble, and passed on in the blurring dark.

Beyond it, the little, low lights still twinkled and the suburb waited with its trailing cars.

But when he lifted the coat she had fallen asleep, her face resting on her arm, and he bent to it tenderly, and listened.

XXXV

AND CLANGING CARS

He looked up into the darkness and waited. He would let her sleep a minute. . . . there was little danger now. The city waited, over there, with its low lights; and the friendly night shut them in. Before the morning dawned he should bring her home—safe home. . . . A kind of simple pride held him, and his heart leaped a little to the stars and sang with them—as he squatted in the low grass, keeping guard.

Presently he leaned and touched her.

She started with a shiver and sprang up, rubbing her eyes and crying out, "I—had—a—dream—" she said softly—"a beautiful dream!" Then her eyes caught the stars and blinked to them—through dusty sleep—and she turned to him with swift cry, "You're here!" she said. "It's *not* a dream! It's *you!*"

And Achilles laughed out. "We're going home," he said, "when you're rested a little."

"But I'm rested *now!*" she cried. "Come!" She sprang to her feet, and they journeyed again—through the night. . . . About them, the plain breathed deep sleeping power—and the long road stretched from the west to the east and brought them home.

Each step, the city lights grew larger, and sparkled more, and spread apart farther, and a low rumble came creeping on the plain—jarring with swift jolts—the clang of cars and lifting life . . . . and, in the distance, a line of light ran fire swiftly on the air, and darted, red and green, and trailed again in fire . . . and Achilles's finger pointed to it. "That fire will take us home," he said.

The child's eye followed the flashing cars—and she smiled out. The first light of the city's rim touched her face.

"Just a little farther!" said Achilles.

"But I am not tired!" said the child,

and she ran a little, beside him, on the stone pavement, her small shoes clumping happily.

Achilles lifted a swift hand to a waiting car. The car clanged its gong—impatient. A big conductor reached down his hand to the child. The bell clanged again and they were off—"Clang-clang, clear the track! Betty Harris is going home— This is the people's carriage—Going home! Going home! Clear the track—clang-clang!"—Through the blinking city streets they rode. Safe among the friendly houses, and the shops and the stores, and the people sleeping behind their blinds—all the people who had loved the child—and scanned the paper for her, every day—and asked, "Is Betty Harris found?" . . . Going home! Going home! . . . They would waken in the morning and read the news and shout across the way —"She's been found—yes—a Greek! He brought her home! Thank God. She's found!"

And little Betty Harris, leaning against the great shoulder beside her, nodded in the car, and dreamed little dreams and looked about her hazily.

The conductor came and stood in front of them with extended hand, and rang the fares, and cast an indifferent, kindly glance at the Greek and his child travelling by night. . . . He did not guess the "scoop" that his two little nickels rang out. The child with roughened hair and clumsy, hanging shoes, was nothing to him—nor to the policeman that boarded the car at the next corner and ran his eye down its empty length to the Greek, sitting erect—with the child sleeping beside him—her dark, tousled head against his arm.

The conductor came again, and touched Achilles on the shoulder and bent to him. "You change here," he said. He was pointing to a car across the square—"You take that," he said. "You understand?" He shouted a little—because the man was a foreigner—and dark—but his tone was

friendly. And Achilles got to his feet, guiding the sleepy child down the rib-floored car that shook beneath them . . . . And the conductor and policeman watched the two figures vanish through the door—and smiled to each other—a friendly smile at foreign folks—who travel in strange ways—and go among us with eager, intent faces fixed on some shining goal we cannot see . . . with the patience of the centuries leaning down to them, and watching them.

XXXVI

THE TELEPHONE AGAIN

In the middle of the square, Achilles stopped—a lighted sign had caught his eye. . . . He hurried the child across the blur of tracks to the sign, and opened a door softly. A sleepy exchange-girl looked up and waited while Achilles's dark fingers searched the page and turned to her—"Main—four-four-seven—" she drawled sleepily after him— "Go in there—number four."

Achilles, with the child's hand in his, entered the booth and closed the door. Little noises clicked about them—queer meanings whispered—and waited—and moved off—the whole night-life of the great city stirred in the little cage. . . . . "Go ahead—four!" called the girl lazily. And Achilles lifted the black tube. The child beside him pressed close, her

eyes fixed on the tube. Achilles's words ran swift on the wire, and her eager face held them—other words came back — sharp — swift. . . . The child heard them crackle, and leap, and break and crackle again in the misty depths—and she touched Achilles's arm softly—"They must not hurt Mrs. Seabury—?" she said. "You tell them not to hurt Mrs. Seabury!" Achilles's hand pressed her shoulder gently. . . "Yes—I tell—they know. . . ." It was a swift aside—and his voice had taken up the tale—"That woman—you not take that woman. . . . You hear? Yes—she good woman!"

"Tell them to look in the cellar!" said Betty. She had pressed closer, on tip-toe. "There is a hole there—under a barrel—and a barrel in the garden. You tell them—"

His eye dropped to her—"In cellar? You say that?"

"Yes—yes—" Her hands were clasped—"They took me there! You tell them!"

Achilles's eye smiled. "Hallo—*you look in cellar!* . . . What you say?—no—I don't see it. But you look in cellar—yes! They make tunnel—yes!" He hung up the receiver and took her hand. "Now we go home," he said.

They passed swiftly out, dropping payment—into a sleepy, unseeing palm—and crossing the square to the car that should carry them home. There were no delays now—only swift-running wheels . . . . a few jolts and stops—and they were out again, beneath the stars, hurrying along the great breakwater of the lake—hurrying home. . . . . The big, red-brown house thrust itself up—its gables reaching to thin blackness—and, suddenly, as they looked, it was touched lightly, as with a great finger, and the dawn glowed mistily up the walls.

They crossed swiftly and mounted the steps, between the lions, the child's feet stumbling a little as they went, but Achilles's hand held fast and his touch on the bell summoned hurrying

feet . . . . . there was a fumbling at the chains—a swift, cautious creak, and the door swung back—"Who is it?" said a voice that peered out. The dawn touched his face grotesquely.

"It's me!" said the child. "It's Betty Harris, Conner."

The man's face fell back. Then he darted forward and glared at the child—through the mysterious, dawning light—on the dark, tender face and the little lip that trembled—looking up—"My God!" he said. He had darted from them.

The door was open wide and the two glided in silently, and stood in the emptiness. Achilles led the child to a great divan across the hall and placed her beside him—her little feet were crossed in the rough shoes and her hands hung listless.

Behind a velvet curtain, the butler's voice called frantic words—a telephone bell rang sharply and whirred and rang a long fierce call and the butler's voice took it up and flung it back—"Yes, sir.

She's here! Yes, sir—that's what I said—she's a-settin' here, sir—on the sofa—with the furriner—yes, sir!" He put his head around the velvet curtain. "Will you speak to your father, Miss?"

His awe-struck hand held the receiver and he helped the strange, little figure to its seat in front of the 'phone. She put the tube to her lips. "Hallo, Daddy. Yes, it's Betty. . . . Mr. Achilles brought me, father. . . . Yes—yes—your little Betty—yes—and I'm all ri-i-ght. . . ." The receiver dropped from her fingers. She had buried her face in her arm and was sobbing softly.

XXXVII

THE BIG BED

Achilles sprang forward. "She's all right, Mr. Harris—all right!" His hand dropped to the trembling shoulder and rested there, as his quiet voice repeated the word. He bent forward and lifted the child in his arms and moved away with her. But before he had traversed the long hall, the little head had fallen forward on his shoulder and the child slept. Behind the velvet curtain, the voice of Conner wrestled faintly with the telephone and all about them great lights glowed on the walls; they lighted the great staircase that swept mistily up, and the figure of Achilles mounting slowly in the stately, lonely house, the child in his arms. His hand steadied the sleeping head with careful touch, against his shoulder. . . . They were not jolting now, in heavy

cars, through the traffic streets—or wandering on the plain. . . . Little Betty Harris had come home.

Above them at the top of the long stairs, a grey figure appeared, and paused a moment and looked down. Then Miss Stone descended swiftly, her hands outstretched—they did not touch the sleeping child, but hovered above her with a look—half pain—half joy.

Achilles smiled to her—"She come home," he whispered.

She turned with quick breath and they mounted the stairs—the child still asleep . . . through the long corridor—to the princess's room beyond—with its soft lights—and great, silken hangings and canopied bed, open for the night—waiting for Betty Harris.

Achilles bent and laid her down, with lightest touch, and straightened himself—"We let her sleep," he said gently, "She—very tired."

They stood looking down—at the brown face and the little, tired lip and sleeping lids. . . . Their eyes met, and

they smiled. . . . They knew—these two, out of all the world—they knew what it meant—that the child was safe.

And out in the glowing dawn, the great car thundered home, and Betty Harris's mother looked out with swift eyes, on the lighting way.

"See, Phil—the sun is up!" She reached out her hand—

"Sit still, Louie—don't tremble so—" he said gently. "She is safe now— They have brought her home. She's there, you know, asleep." He spoke slowly—as if to a child. . . . He was gathering up the morning in his heart—this big, harsh, master of men—his little girl was safe—and a common Greek—a man out of the streets—peddling bananas and calling up and down—had made his life worth living. His big, tense mind gripped the fact—and held it. Something seemed speaking to him—out of the east, over there, past the rushing car. . . . A common Greek. . . . He had flung his wealth and

hammered hard—but somehow *this* man had loved her—*his* little girl!

"Phil—?" she said softly.

"Yes, dear?"

"Are we almost home?"

He looked out. "Half an hour yet—sit still, Louie—!" He held her hand close. "Sit still!" he said—and the miles slipped past.

"She is there—Phil? —Yes? They wouldn't lie to me. . . All these weeks!" she said softly. . . . "I don't think I could bear it much longer, Phil . . . !" The tears were on her cheeks, raining down and he put his rough face against her, adrift in a new world.

And over the great lake the sun burst out, on a flashing car—and the door flung wide to Betty Harris's mother, flying with swift, sure feet up the great, stone steps. . . . "This way, ma'am—she's in here—her own room—this way, ma'am."

She was kneeling by the great canopied bed, her head bent very low. The

brown face trembled a breath . . . the child put up a hand in her dream, "Mother-dear!" she said—and dreamed on. . . . .

THE END

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